



# MEDIEVAL INDIA

HISTORY TEXTBOOK FOR CLASS VII



# MEDIEVAL INDIA

History Textbook for Class VII



# MEDIEVAL INDIA

History Textbook for Class VII

ROMILA THAPAR



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

June 1988  
Asadha 1910  
PD 70T—RSS

© National Council of Educational Research and Training, 1988

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

- ☐ No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.
- ☐ This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise disposed off without the publisher's consent, in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published.
- ☐ The correct price of this publication is the price printed on this page. Any revised price indicated by a rubber stamp or by a sticker or by any other means is incorrect and should be unacceptable.

**Publication Team**

C.N. Rao, *Head, Publication Department*

Prabhakar Dwivedi	<i>Chief Editor</i>	U.P. Rao	<i>Chief Production Officer</i>
R.S. Saxena	<i>Editor</i>	Suresh Chand	<i>Production Officer</i>
Gobind Ram	<i>Editorial Assistant</i>	C.P. Tandon	<i>Art Officer</i>
		V.R. Devikar	<i>Production Assistant</i>

**Cover design:** Santò Dutta and C.P. Tandon

**Transparencies :** B. Ashok

**Indian miniature paintings :** National Museum, New Delhi

**Rs. 6.75**

Published at the Publication Department by the Secretary, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110016, photocomposed at S.P. Electronics, Daryaganj, and printed at Saraswati Offset Printers A-5/II, Naraina Industrial Area, New Delhi 110028.



# Foreword

Reorienting the content and process of education is of crucial importance in the implementation of the National Policy on Education-1986. As a step in this direction the NCERT has already brought out a framework for national curriculum for primary and secondary schools and syllabus guidelines and detailed syllabi in various subjects for various stages of school education. New textbooks and other instructional materials are also being brought out in a phased manner.

History is introduced as a separate subject as a part of the social sciences from class VI onwards. The NCERT's syllabus guidelines and detailed syllabus in history recommend the study of Indian history at the upper primary stage (classes VI-VIII). It also recommends that the study of the history of ancient India may be introduced in class VI, of medieval India in class VII and of modern India in class VIII. The National Policy of Education has stressed the importance of core curricular areas, along with a national curricular framework, in building the National System of Education. Many of the core curricular areas and the values that they are visualized to promote are directly related to the study of history. This relationship is obvious in the case of objectives such as promoting knowledge and understanding of India's common cultural heritage. It is no less important in its relationship with other objectives of the core areas such as the inculcation of scientific temper, and egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes and removal of social barriers. It is also of crucial significance in combating obscurantism, religious fanaticism, superstition and fatalism.

Since almost its inception, the NCERT has had the benefit of the association and support of some of the best scholars in the country in the area of history in all its programmes relating to the teaching of this subject in schools. The NCERT's syllabi and textbooks in history, by incorporating the latest research and adopting a scientific approach to the subject, and by their emphasis on forces, trends and institutions rather than on dynastic history, have given a long-felt new orientation to the study of this subject in schools. In preparing its syllabi and textbooks, the NCERT has received the help and cooperation of a number of eminent scholars as well as teachers from different parts of the country.

This textbook on the history of medieval India has been written by Professor Romila Thapar. It was prepared under the auspices of the Editorial Board comprising Dr. S. Gopal (Chairman), Dr. S. Nurul Hasan, Dr. Satish Chandra and Dr. Romila Thapar (Members) and Dr. K. Maitra (Secretary) and was first brought out in 1967.

This textbook deals with the history of India from the end of the ancient period to the beginning of the modern period, that is from about the eighth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century. This textbook, together with the textbook on the history of ancient India and modern India, will introduce the child during the three years of the upper primary stage to a broad view of the history of our country and our people.



The NCERT is grateful to Mrs. Indira Arjun Dev for selecting and getting prepared the illustrations used in this book and for her help at various stages in the publication of this book. The line drawings have been prepared by Shri Abhishek Das. The Council is grateful to him. The photographs of medieval coins used in this book have been supplied by the National Museum, New Delhi and all the other photographs have been supplied by the Archaeological Survey of India. The Council is indebted to them.

The Council will welcome readers' comments and suggestions on any aspect of this textbook.

P.L. MALHOTRA

*Director*

National Council of Educational  
Research and Training

# Contents

<i>Foreword</i>		iii
CHAPTER ONE	India and the World	1
CHAPTER TWO	Kingdoms of the South (A.D. 800-1200)	9
CHAPTER THREE	Kingdoms of the North (A.D. 800-1200)	21
CHAPTER FOUR	The Delhi Sultanate	36
CHAPTER FIVE	The Life of the People	50
CHAPTER SIX	The Coming of the Mughals and the Europeans	64
CHAPTER SEVEN	Akbar	86
CHAPTER EIGHT	The Age of Magnificence	97
CHAPTER NINE	The Fall of the Mughal Empire	115
IMPORTANT DATES	...	124



41051803

Responsibility for the correctness of internal details of maps rests with the publisher



## CHAPTER ONE

# India and the World

The word medieval means 'the middle age'. It is used in history to refer to that period which lies between the ancient and the modern periods, and is quite literally the middle period. How do we know when the ancient period ends and the medieval period begins? We have taken the eighth century A.D. as the beginning and the eighteenth century A.D. as the end of the medieval period? Why? Because as you will see when you read this book, there were many changes taking place in Indian society in about the eighth century A.D. and during this time these changes influenced many aspects of Indian society. They influenced the political and economic aspect, social laws, religion, language, art—in short, almost everything. So we recognize that a new stage in Indian history had come about. We may say that this change took place around the eighth century.

We have to be just a little vague about the date because just as a person

does not change suddenly in one year, similarly societies also take time to change. Nor does everybody become influenced by new ideas at the same time. Some of these changes in Indian history began earlier than the eighth century and in some parts of India their influence was felt a little later. But taking a general view of things, we can say that the new phase took root in the eighth century. In the same way with the break-up of the Mughal empire and the coming of the British, the eighteenth century also saw many changes. So we refer to this century as the closing of the medieval period.

Medieval Indian history is, in many ways, different from ancient Indian history because we are more familiar with so much that happened in the medieval period. The languages which we now speak in India developed at this time. Some of the food we eat and the clothes we wear became popular during this period. The history of many of our current religious beliefs can be



traced back to this age. We know about these things because we have more information on medieval India than we have on ancient India. The medieval period is closer to us in time, and the many more sources that have survived, give us a clear picture of the period.

As you may remember, we saw in the ancient period that evidence, or the 'clues' of history, are collected from two main types of sources—literary and archaeological. The same is true of the medieval period. In the early part of the medieval period, that is from about the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, we have a great deal of information from inscriptions. These were written on plates of copper or on stone and have been found in large numbers in villages and temples all over India. It is not surprising that the study of inscriptions, or epigraphy as it is called, becomes a major source of evidence during this period.

There are also a great variety of literary sources. The early writing was mostly on palm-leaf and birch bark, but from the thirteenth century paper was used for writing. A number of these books have survived. Some of them are chronicles or accounts of the life and activities of various rulers and dynasties. Some are memoirs or autobiographical accounts of the lives of the rulers, such as the memoirs of Babar and Jahangir. There are also many accounts written by travellers

who visited India during these centuries. Others are works on religious subjects or literature. Many of them are illustrated with beautiful little paintings called miniature paintings. In order to make the study of this period easier, it is sometimes divided into two phases. The early part of the medieval period stretches from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries. It includes the rule of the Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas and their conflict over Kanauj, as well as the Rajput kingdoms in the north and the Chola kingdoms in the south. The later part of the medieval period, from the thirteenth century onwards, covers the period of what has been called the Delhi Sultanate, the Bahmani and Vijayanagar kingdoms and the Mughal empire.

In the early medieval period, the society grew out of the earlier systems which we discussed in the book on ancient India. By the later medieval period these changes had become established, that is they were no longer regarded as new. Now there were some new ideas and some further changes, but these came from outside India and were brought by the new dynasties which were ruling in some parts of the subcontinent. These rulers were mainly Turks, Afghans and Mughals, who had settled in India. The ideas which they brought with them did not produce any fundamental change in Indian society but they did help to enrich



Indian culture. So, despite the fact that the rulers of India from the thirteenth century were often people of foreign origin, we still call this the medieval period. Change of rulers alone seldom leads to changes in society. The Turks and the Mughals were ruling Indians who lived in much the same way as Indians in the early part of the medieval period. In any case the Turks and the Mughals made India their homeland and became a part of the Indian population.

The coming of people from outside India during this period brought India into very close contact with the world outside. In order to understand the coming of these foreigners to India, it is necessary to know what was happening in Western Asia, Europe, Central Asia, China and South-East Asia.

As we saw in the earlier book, an event of great importance took place in Arabia in the seventh century A.D. Prophet Muhammad preached the new religion of Islam. This united the Arab tribes and soon they became a political group. They conquered many parts of Western Asia—Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Persia and Sind and Egypt too. After the death of the Prophet, the Arabs were ruled by a series of Caliphs (the literal meaning of the word being, 'the successor' or 'vice-regent'). The first four Caliphs had been companions of Prophet Muhammad. They were succeeded by the Umayyids who ruled from the city of

Damascus. A still later line was that of the Abbasids who ruled from Baghdad. Harun-al-Rashid whose court was famous throughout the world was a Caliph at Baghdad.

Gradually the Arabs conquered more territory, especially in North Africa. Soon they were in Spain and were threatening France, but were held back in the south of France. Conquest was not the only thing which interested the Arabs. Within the territory under their control, they encouraged the development of trade. Soon the Arabs were trading with many parts of the world—with India, China, Europe and East and West Africa. This trade made the Arabs rich and they used the money to build a new civilization. They took a great interest during this period in the knowledge of the Greeks, the Persians, the Chinese and the Indians and they developed this knowledge further in their own centres of learning. At this time the Arab civilization was one of the most advanced in the world.

In the midst of all this prosperity and cultural development, the Arabs were troubled by war with two groups of people—the Europeans and the Mongols. The power of Europe had declined considerably after the end of the Roman empire. Rome was attacked by a series of barbarian tribes such as the Huns (a branch of the same tribe which attacked the Gupta empire in India), the Goths, and the Vandals and

by about A.D. 500 the Roman empire had come to an end. Europe suffered as a result of this, and the period in Europe from the fifth to the eleventh centuries is often called 'The Dark Ages'. There was little political security because of constant wars. Law and order suffered and farmers particularly often had their food looted from them. Trade declined and this resulted in the decline of big cities as well. Very little value was placed on knowledge because few people had the leisure to enjoy education. Learning became limited to religious centres and monasteries. The only cultural life which did flourish in Europe at this time was Christianity. Christian monks travelled all over the continent making converts, and Christianity gradually became popular. Some of the German kings were enthusiastic in their support of Christianity and in the tenth century A.D. an empire consisting of Germany, Italy and a few other areas was created and called the Holy Roman Empire.

Another major change which took place in Europe during the 'Dark Ages' was the emergence of feudal organization, or feudalism. The word feudalism comes from the Latin word 'feudum' and means 'a piece of land which is granted in return for services'. Land was given to officers instead of cash salaries by the king. It was also given to others whom the king wished to reward. The peasants, therefore, work-

ed for the lords or the persons to whom land had been given, who were also known as vassals. Among the duties of the vassal was to provide soldiers for the king. Most of the peasants were serfs, that is they had to work on the land of the vassal. They were not slaves and were not owned by the vassal, but they were often treated very badly. The advantages of feudalism were reaped by the vassals. The peasants put in all the hard work and labour, working on the land, but the wealth was not equally divided. The vassals and the king took most of the wealth and lived in great luxury. The peasants remained poor.

During the 'Dark Ages', Europe was cut off from the Arab world. But later, Europe became interested in the Arab world. This interest arose out of two things: trade and religion. Trade had made the Arabs rich; and this attracted some of the European traders who also wanted to take part in this trade. The spread of Islam also worried the newly converted Christians of Europe. So a series of religious wars called the Crusades, were organized, in which European kings and knights with their armies fought the Muslims in the eastern Mediterranean. The Crusaders did not succeed in conquering the land. But the wars did bring the European and Arab worlds closer together and Europeans began to take part in the Arab trade. The Europeans also began



to take an interest in Arab learning. The knowledge of the Arabs played an important part in the development of learning in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In the ninth century the power of the Abbasid Caliphs weakened. The territory which they had held and which had been divided into provinces broke away from their control and finally became independent. Among these were the provinces of Ghazni and Ghor. The Seljuk Turks, who were powerful in Central Asia, moved westwards and began to establish their rule in some of these provinces. By the eleventh century, the Seljuk Turks were establishing their power in western Asia. They attacked Persia, Iraq, Syria, and the Byzantine empire, and soon after this settled down in these regions. The Byzantine empire had its capital at Constantinople (modern Istanbul) and had once been the rival of Rome in its vastness and riches. The civilization of Byzantium was based on the ancient Greek civilization. Its prosperity was due to the fact that it controlled the trade between the eastern Mediterranean and Russia and Scandinavia and also took part in the trade which came through Central Asia from China to Persia. In the thirteenth century there was another attack from Central Asia and this time it was the Mongols led under Chenghiz Khan. The attack weakened the power of the Seljuk Turks in western Asia. The only excep-

tion to this were the Ottoman Turks who had settled in Anatolia and who succeeded in capturing Constantinople in 1453. They continued to maintain their hold on this part of western Asia.

Meanwhile the power of the Mongols increased and they controlled the land from western Asia and southern Russia across Central Asia into China. From the middle of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fourteenth century, the Mongols were ruling in China. China had also been a rich and powerful country under the T'ang and Sung dynasties (seventh to thirteenth centuries). So by conquering China, the Mongols increased their political power and their wealth. Central Asia was important during this period because the trade between China and western Asia went via Central Asia. The route taken by trading caravans was called the 'Silk Route', because Chinese silk was an important item of trade. In addition new inventions from China travelled with the cargo to western Asia. The making of gunpowder, paper and the invention of the compass and of printing, all came from China. Thus Central Asia, because of trade, was a useful area to control. The Mongols had been converted to Islam, so they in turn converted some of the tribes living in Central Asia and parts of China.

The 'Silk Route' was not the only route used in the Chinese trade. Chinese merchants also took cargoes on ships

which sailed from Canton, Amoy and other places in southern China. Some of these ships came as far as India and East Africa; others stopped at the ports in South-East Asia. In countries such as Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Java, Sumatra, Malaya, both Chinese and Indian merchants competed for trade. The merchants brought not only cargoes but their own cultures as well. In the fourteenth century the Arab merchants had also established themselves in South-East Asia.

Thus we see that the medieval period was one in which the whole world was coming closer together. Trade was bringing people from various areas into contact. No country could be isolated any more.

India too was drawn into all these events. To begin with, Indian contact with the Arabs and the Chinese was through trade. The Turks and the Mughals in Central Asia encouraged this trade. Later they came to India as

conquerors. The pattern was the same with the Europeans who came at first as traders and then became rulers.

In the early medieval period northern India was divided into a number of kingdoms. These kingdoms frequently fought with one another. In south India this period saw the rule of the powerful Chola kings. They conquered large areas of the peninsula and their armies came as far north as the Ganga. They were very rich because the south Indian merchants at this time were trading with the countries of South-East Asia and with China. Much of the money was spent on beautiful temples which were also centres of learning. There were thinkers and philosophers at this time whose teachings influenced Indian thought in every part of the country. It was in south India that Indian culture during the early medieval period was further enriched and developed.

### Exercises

#### I. Words and terms you should know:

1. Crusades—Wars undertaken by European Christians between the 11th and 14th centuries to recover the 'Holy Land', particularly Jerusalem, from the Arabs and the Turks.
2. Dark Ages—A term commonly used to denote the period in western European history which began roughly with the fall of the western Roman empire in A.D. 476 and lasted until the eleventh century.
3. Inscriptions—Documents incised on some hard or permanent material, (generally stone or metal) in the form of letters or other conventional signs for the purpose of conveying some information.



4. Caliph—A title of the head of the Muslim community, literally meaning 'the successor' or 'vice-regent', first applied to Abu Bakr, as successor of the Prophet Muhammad.
5. Feudalism—A political and economic system which came into existence in western Europe during the 'Dark Ages'.

II. Match the contents of column A with those of column B.

A	B
1. Many of our current religious beliefs trace their history	1. brought India into the very close contact with world outside.
2. The early part of the medieval period stretches from	2. at Baghdad.
3. The coming of people from outside India during the medieval period	3. back to the medieval period.
4. Harun-al-Rashid whose court was famous throughout the world was a Caliph	4. the 'Dark Ages'.
5. The period in Europe from the fifth to the eleventh centuries is often called	5. the eighth to the thirteenth centuries.

III. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.

1. With the break-up of the Mughal empire and the coming of the British the \_\_\_\_\_ century saw many changes. (eighth, tenth, eighteenth)
2. A major change which took place in \_\_\_\_\_ during the 'Dark Ages' was the emergence of feudal organization. (Asia, Africa, India, Europe)
3. The Byzantine empire had its capital at \_\_\_\_\_ and had once been the rival of \_\_\_\_\_. (Constantinople, Anatolia, Baghdad, India, Rome)
4. From the middle of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fourteenth century, the Mongols were ruling in \_\_\_\_\_. (India, China, Iraq, Turkey)
5. After the death of the Prophet, the \_\_\_\_\_ were ruled by a series of Caliphs. (Indians, Africans, Chinese, Arabs)

IV. Answer the following questions:

1. In what ways did the Arabs extend their power?
2. Who were the Mongols? Name the area they invaded.
3. Why is the period from the fifth to the eleventh centuries called the 'Dark Ages'?
4. How did the Indians come in contact with the Arabs and the Chinese?

## V. Interesting things to do :

1. On a map of Europe, Asia and Africa point out the places which the Arabs conquered.
2. On a map of the world trace the route through which foreigners reached India in pursuit of trade.



## CHAPTER TWO

# Kingdoms of the South (A.D. 800-1200)

In the medieval period of Indian history the northern and the southern halves of our sub-continent came into closer contact. The Vindhya mountains and the Deccan no longer acted as a barrier. This area became a bridge between the north and the south. This can be seen from three things in particular. First, the kingdoms of the northern Deccan tried to spread their control as far as the Ganga valley. Secondly, the religious movements of the south soon became popular in the north as well. Thirdly, many *brahmins* from the north were invited to settle in the Deccan and the south and were granted lands. The kingdoms of the sub-continent were no longer cut off from each other as they had tended to be in the earlier period.

### Kingdoms of the Peninsula

The most important of the kingdoms

of the peninsula which tried to conquer a part of the Ganga valley was the Rashtrakuta kingdom in the northern Deccan. The Rashtrakutas (as we shall see in the next chapter) fought repeatedly against two powerful dynasties, the Pratiharas and the Palas, for the control of Kanauj and the area around it. The Pratiharas were established in western and central India and the Palas in the east. But the Rashtrakutas had also to fight many campaigns against the most powerful of the southern kings, the Cholas. The Chola kings began as the rulers of Tamilnad, the region around modern Tanjore. They gradually built their power by defeating the Pallava kings and other local rulers. By the eleventh century A.D., theirs was the most important kingdom in the south. The kingdom of the Pandyas was to the south of the Cholas, in the region around modern Madurai. On the west coast was the



Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.

© Government of India copyright, 1988.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.



kingdom of the Cheras (modern Kerala). By the twelfth century, some of these kingdoms had declined and new kingdoms had arisen. The Rashtrakutas had been succeeded by a dynasty related to the Chalukyas of the seventh century and therefore called by historians, the later Chalukyas. They were in turn overthrown by the Yadavas who ruled from Devagiri (modern Daulatabad in Maharashtra). The Kakatiyas ruled in Warangal, in modern Andhra Pradesh. The Hoysalas ruled in Warangal, in modern Andhra Pradesh. The Hoysalas ruled at Dvarasamudra, near the city of Mysore. The Cholas had to fight all these kingdoms in order to maintain their power which they did until the thirteenth century.

### The Chola Kings

Amongst the early Chola kings who helped to establish the kingdom was Vijayalaya (c. 846-871), who conquered Tanjore. Even more important was Parantaka I (907-955). He conquered the land of the Pandyas and took the title of Maduraikonda, 'the conqueror of Madurai'. But Parantaka was also defeated by one of the Rashtrakuta kings, Krishna II. Parantaka realized that he would not be successful in war unless he had a strong kingdom. His kingdom would be strong if his people had enough food and the necessities of life and were well-governed. So he



Outer wall of a Hoysala Temple encouraged agriculture in the Chola kingdom. This was not always easy as some of the land was rocky where crops would not grow. Besides there was the problem of irrigation-water for the fields. Near the rivers, water from them could be used. But in other places rain water had to be collected and stored, and irrigation canals were built to carry the water from the tanks to the fields.

The two best remembered of the Chola kings are Rajaraja I and his son Rajendra. Rajaraja I (985-1016) was a brilliant general and campaigned in many directions. He attacked the kingdom of the Pandyas and of the Cheras as well as parts of Mysore. He also campaigned northwards in the Deccan and the region of Vengi (in modern Andhra Pradesh). He fought these campaigns in order to prove the strength of Chola power. Rajaraja was aware of the importance of controlling the sea. He realized that if he could assert his strength along the coasts of south India, then the Cholas would be even stronger. So, he took out a naval expedition and attacked both Ceylon and the Maldiv Islands. However, he had more than one reason for this attack. The coasts of Kerala, Ceylon and the Maldiv Islands had become extremely rich through the money that came to them from trade. India sent many things to western Asia such as textiles, spices and precious stones. The people who came from western Asia to trade in these goods were the Arab merchants. Many of them settled in the towns along the west coast of India. Here they lived peacefully, married the local women and carried on their trade. Since they lived in harmony with Indians and brought wealth to India through their trade, they were respected and treated well. The kingdoms of the Cheras, the Maldiv Is-

lands and Ceylon were the main centres of this trade. Thus the conquest of these areas would have diverted the income from this West Asian trade to the Chola kingdom. But although Rajaraja attacked these areas, he was not able to control them for any length of time.

Rajaraja's son, Rajendra was even more ambitious. He had a long reign, ruling until 1044. He continued his father's policy and fought many campaigns in the peninsula. But of all his campaigns two were very bold and daring. One was when his armies marched up the east coast of India, through Orissa, and up to the Ganga river. Here they threatened the Pala king ruling in Bengal before returning to the south. Rajendra's northern campaign was in many ways similar to Samudragupta's southern campaign which had taken place 700 years earlier.

The second was Rajendra's daring naval campaign which took place in



Rajendra Chola's Coin



South-East Asia. For many centuries Indian merchants had been trading with various parts of South-East Asia, and this trade had also spread to southern China. Indian goods were sent by ship to southern China and cargo was brought back not only from China but also from South-East Asia. The Indian ships had to pass through the Straits of Molucca which were then held by the kingdom of Shrivijaya (which included the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra). The merchants of Shrivijaya naturally felt that if they could take over this trade they would get the profits. So they began to create difficulties for the Indian ships. The Indian merchants appealed to the Chola king and Rajendra sent out a huge navy. The forces of Shrivijaya were defeated and agreed to let Indian ships travel safely through the Straits. Rajendra came to the help of the merchants probably because many of them were from the Chola kingdom and the profits they made helped to increase the revenue of the Chola kingdom.

The successors of Rajendra I spent much time and effort and money on fighting wars with the other kingdoms of the peninsula. Some of these wars were not successful. Gradually the Chola kingdom became weaker and the others became stronger. By the end of the thirteenth century, the Chola kingdom was no more.

### Chola Government

The Chola king was the most powerful person in the kingdom. In spite of this he was expected to take the advice of either his Council of Ministers or of his *purohita*. He also had special officers in charge of various branches of administration. The kingdom was divided into provinces known as *mandalams*. Each *mandalam* was divided into a number of *valanadus*. Each *valanadu* had a certain number of villages. The capital of the Chola kingdom was at Tanjore to begin with; later it was moved to Kanchipuram (near modern Madras). For some time the capital was also located at Gangaikonda-cholapuram, 'the city of the conquerors of the Ganga', a new city built near Tanjore.

In many of the villages the administration was carried out, not by the government officials but by the villagers themselves. These villagers had a village assembly or council known as the *ur* or *sabha*. There are long inscriptions on the walls of some of the village temples giving details of how the *ur* or *sabha* were organized. Villagers who owned land or belonged to the upper castes were chosen by lot to the council. The life and the work of the village were discussed in these councils. This was a source of popular strength because it united the people in the village. The responsibility for the

prosperity of the village was shared by the people living there. The council was often divided into a number of small committees and each committee would look after one aspect of village administration. For example, there was a Tank Committee in one village council, whose work it was to see to it that there was water in the village tank and that it was properly distributed in the fields cultivated by persons belonging to that village.

The revenue of the Chola kingdom came from two sources—taxes on land and the produce of the land, and taxes on trade. Part of the revenue was kept for the king. The rest was used on public works, such as the building of roads and tanks, on salaries of officials, on paying for the upkeep of the army and navy, and on the building of temples. The taxes on land were usually collected from the village councils. Wealthy landowners paid their taxes to the officers. The taxes on trade were collected from the merchants who generally lived in the towns.

### Society

Apart from the king, the royal family and the court, there were two types of persons who were greatly respected. These were the *brahmins* and the merchants. The *brahmins* were respected learned persons. In fact those *brahmins* who were very learned were given

land and villages as gifts from the king. These were known as *brahmadeya* gifts. The *brahmins* did not have to pay any tax on them, so some *brahmins* were very rich as well. And when their children inherited these lands and villages they lived very comfortably. Some of the *brahmins* became so rich that they began to invest their money in trade.

Merchants prospered in the Chola kingdom. There was trade with China, South-East Asia and with western Asia. In addition, there was trade within the Indian sub-continent itself and goods were exchanged between the northern and southern kingdoms. Some of the merchants joined together in a body called the merchant-guild, such as the *manigramam*. A guild usually consists of persons working in the same profession. In this case the merchants pooled together their money and became a kind of bank. Each one contributed his share of money. This was very useful because as a guild they had more money and could trade on a larger scale than they could as single merchants. Each merchant-guild had its own caravans for transporting goods. Some of them even had their own armed guards who went with the caravans and defended them in case they were attacked by robbers.

In the towns the town-guild collected and sold locally made goods. The merchant-guild would buy these goods



from the town-guild and then send them wherever there was a demand for them. Goods were sometimes exchanged for goods and sometimes paid for in cash. The prosperity of the merchants meant the prosperity of the town. If they were wealthy and paid big taxes to the state, then there would be more money for the state. It is not surprising that in 1077 an embassy of seventy-two merchants was sent to China to look into the possibilities of further trade with that country.

However not everyone was wealthy and prosperous. The labourers in towns and the peasants in the villages were often very poor. They had to work very hard so that the king and others could live in luxury. Many of the

*shudras* had a difficult life. The lowest caste were not even allowed to enter and worship in the temple.

### The Temple

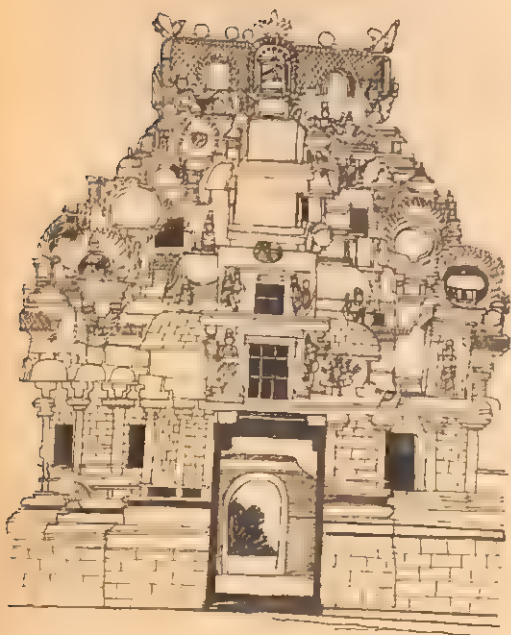
The king and the rich people gave large donations of money and land for the building and maintenance of temples. In every village and in every town a temple was built, but in some of the bigger towns or in holy places, the temples were larger than anywhere else. The royal temples built by the Chola kings, (such as the Brihadesvara temple at Tanjore) were particularly magnificent.

In the Pallava period, the temples had been rock-cut shrines. They were

Brihadesvara Temple, Tanjore



called rock-cut because they were carved out of large rocks or else cut into hillsides. The most beautiful of these are the temples of Mahabalipuram near Madras. Gradually the craftsmen began building temples which were not cut out of the hillside but were constructed with blocks of stone on the ground. There are many such early temples in the town of Kanchi-



Gopuram of a Temple

puram. The earliest temples had consisted of a shrine-room and an entrance hall or a verandah. As the religious ritual increased and more ceremonies were performed at the temples, it became necessary to build additional rooms and halls within the courtyard of the temple. Later the courtyard was surrounded by a wall. The gateway was known as the *gopuram*. In the courtyard many smaller shrines were built in which the images of other gods or of the saints were kept and these were often also worshipped. In addition a tall spire-like structure was built over the central shrine which came to be called the *shikhara*. This was very high and thus everyone visiting the temple could see where the central shrine was located.

The image of the god or goddess was placed in the shrine room. The images were made either in stone or in bronze. Those made in bronze are particularly beautiful and have become world famous now.

The temple in the Chola kingdom became the centre of social activity. It was not merely a place of worship, but it was also a place where people gathered together. During the time of the festivals it became the meeting place of all the people in the countryside around. Those who were wealthy gave large donations of money and offerings to the temples. Some of the money was used in decorating the tem-





Bronze Image of Nataraja

ple. The walls were covered with sculpture and with scenes depicting both gods and men. There were court scenes, battle scenes, scenes of worship and of music and dancing. The images in stone and bronze were made with great care and devotion. On festive days they were covered with rich silks and golden ornaments and taken out in procession in large wooden carriages. The temple was not only a beautiful building but the store-house of great riches as well.

### Education

The temple as we have seen was

both a place of worship and a meeting place. It was here that the village assembly would hold its meetings and the business discussed was sometimes recorded on the walls of the temple. The priests of the temple were also the local teachers as there was no separate school. The school was held in the temple courtyard. The young students, most of whom were *brahmins*, learnt their lessons in two languages. One was Sanskrit. Much of the religious teaching was in Sanskrit since texts such as the *Vedas* had to be studied very thoroughly. The students also learnt Tamil, the language which was widely spoken in the Chola kingdom. Tamil was spoken by the people of this part of India before they had begun to use Sanskrit as well. Tamil was influenced by Sanskrit and gradually incorporated a number of Sanskrit words. Many literary and religious works in Sanskrit became popular when they were rewritten in Tamil, such as the famous *Ramayana* of Kampan. Many of the inscriptions of the Chola kings are written in both Sanskrit and Tamil. Poems and plays were also written in Tamil at this time by the leading poets and dramatists.

Tamil was not the only language which was spoken in south India although it was the oldest. In Andhra, Telugu was used by the local people. There were adaptations of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* in Telugu

and other original writings which were very popular. Nannayya is remembered for his excellent adaptation of parts of the *Mahabharata*. The adaptation was later added to by the poet Tikkana. In the region around modern Mysore, Kannada was the most widely spoken language, as it is even today. The poets Pampa, Ponna and Ranna are called the 'three jewels' of Kannada literature because of the fine quality of their writing. Kannada also became popular because a group of religious teachers, called the *lingayatas* preached in Kannada and not in Sanskrit. As you may remember, the Tamil saints—the *alvars* and the *nayannars*—in an earlier period had also used Tamil in preference to Sanskrit. The *lingayatas* used Kannada because everyone, no matter how rich or poor, could understand the language and would therefore know what the *lingayatas* were teaching. If they had taught in Sanskrit then only a small section of the people, who were educated, would have understood them.

### Religion

There were a number of popular religious movements in south India at this time. Some of them were continuing the teaching of the *alvars* and the *nayannars*. Others had introduced new ideas. Most of them taught that religion did not consist in worshipping

images and repeating the prayers which the priests recited. Religion consisted in loving God and in being kind to fellow human beings. They did not want society to be divided into castes because they felt that all human beings should be treated as equal. One of the most important of these sects was that of the *lingayatas* whose founder, Basava, lived in the twelfth century.

This was also the period when a number of learned people took an interest in philosophy. Reputed philosophers taught in south India but their philosophy was known in various parts of India. Many of the religious teachers came from the south although later, north India also had its share of teachers.

The best known of these teachers were Shankara and Ramanuja. Shankara who had lived in the eighth century came from Kerala. His philosophy is known as the system of *advaita* (the unique which has no second). He taught that it was only by knowledge that one could worship God. Shankara had travelled all over India teaching his philosophy to all those who wished to learn from him and debating with other scholars and teachers. He also established many centres of philosophy.

Ramanuja was born in the eleventh century. He preached that one should devote oneself entirely to the worship of God through *bhakti* (devotion and



love). He did not therefore agree with Shankara and insisted that God was better worshipped through love than through knowledge. Ramanuja was also upset by the fact that some people were not allowed to enter the temple because they were of low caste. For him, high and low castes did not exist for he saw all human beings as equal. Another religious teacher who had a large following was Madhava. He lived in the thirteenth century. His teaching was more like that of Ramanuja.

The Chola period thus made an important contribution to Indian culture. The political power of the Cholas

made their kingdom the strongest in the peninsula. For a while, they were among the most powerful of the kingdoms of the sub-continent. The commerce and trade of this time brought wealth to the Chola merchants and also to the Chola kingdom. Poets and writers wrote a number of works in Tamil, Telugu and Kannada. Magnificent temples were built. Popular religious movements strengthened the teaching of *bhakti* and brought new ideas into Hinduism. The philosophers of the time enriched Indian thought. Many of these developments had an impact not only in the peninsula but also in other parts of India.

### Exercises

#### I. Words and terms you should know :

1. *mandalam*—A province
2. *valanadu*—A district
3. *ur*—A council
4. *brahmadeya*—Tax-free land given to a brahmin as a gift
5. *manigramam*—The name of a merchant-guild
6. *gopuram*—The gateway of a temple
7. *shikhara*—A spire-like structure over the central shrine of a temple
8. *advaita*—A system of Indian philosophy preached by Shankara.

#### II. Which of the statements given below are true? Answer 'yes' or 'no' after each statement.

1. The Cholas fought repeatedly against the two powerful dynasties, the Pratiharas and the Palas.
2. The Chola kings began as the rulers of Tamilnad in the region around modern Tanjore.
3. The Rashtrakutas ruled at Dvarasamudra near Mysore.
4. Parantaka was defeated by one of the Rashtrakuta kings, Krishna II.
5. The successors of Rajendra spent much time and effort and money on

fighting wars with the other kingdoms of the peninsula.

III. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.

1. An important kingdom of the peninsula which tried to conquer a part of the Ganga valley was the \_\_\_\_\_ kingdom. (Chola, Rashtrakuta, Chalukya, northern Deccan)
2. The Rashtrakutas had to fight many campaigns against the most powerful of the southern kings, the \_\_\_\_\_. (Kakatiyas, Hoysalas, Cholas)
3. Amongst the early Chola kings who helped to establish the kingdom was \_\_\_\_\_ who conquered Tanjore. (Rajendra, Vijayalaya, Parantaka)

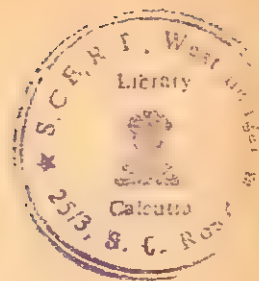
IV. Answer the following questions:

1. What were the causes of the conflict between the Cholas and the kingdom of Shrivijaya?
2. What were the main features of the Chola government?
3. The Cholas were great builders of temples. Do you agree with the statement? Write a short account in support of your answer.
4. Would it be correct to say that this period saw much literary activity in south India?

V. Interesting things to do:

1. On a map of Asia locate the places where Chola merchants carried on their trade.
2. Collect pictures of the temples of India and note the differences between the northern and the southern style of temple building.





## CHAPTER THREE

# Kingdoms of the North (A.D. 800-1200)

The post-Gupta age in northern India was mainly an age of small kingdoms. Time and again ruler, such as Harsha, tried to establish an empire. But the attempts were seldom successful. The desire to build an empire did not however disappear. There were three large kingdoms in the period from about A.D. 750 to 1000 which continually fought each other and tried to gain control over northern India. None of them succeeded for any length of time.

### The Struggle for Kanauj

Many of the campaigns in northern India were fought over the city of Kanauj. This had been the capital of Harsha and remained an important city. It was well-situated in the northern plain because whoever captured Kanauj could control the Ganga valley. Three major kingdoms were involved in this struggle and they occupied

Kanauj in turn. Modern historians have referred to this as the tripartite (i.e. three party) struggle for Kanauj. The three kingdoms were those of the Rashtrakutas, the Pratiharas and the Palas.

The Rashtrakutas were ruling in the northern Deccan in the region around Nasik. Their capital was at Malkhed, a beautiful and prosperous city. As we have seen they had been fighting in the peninsula with the Pallavas and the Chalukyas. But they had an ambitious king, Amoghavarsha, who wanted Rashtrakuta power to be as strong in northern India as it was in the Deccan. So, he attempted to control the north by capturing Kanauj.

The Pratiharas ruled in Avanti and parts of southern Rajasthan. They had once been a family of local officials but were now an independent dynasty of kings. They first became powerful after defeating what the sources of the



Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.

© Government of India copyright, 1988.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.



time describe as the *mlechchhas*. The term *mlechchha* means a person who is a barbarian or outcaste, and it was used to describe most foreigners. We do not know exactly who the *mlechchhas* were in this case, but probably the reference is to the Arabs. The Arabs had by now conquered and occupied Sind. The Pratiharas after their success with the Arabs, took their armies eastwards and by the end of the eighth century had captured Kanauj.

But the Pala kings ruling in Bengal were also interested in capturing Kanauj. The Palas ruled for about four hundred years and their kingdom consisted of almost the whole of Bengal and much of Bihar. The first Pala king was Gopala. He was elected king by the nobles because the previous ruler had died without an heir. Gopala is remembered for having established the Pala dynasty.

Gopala's son, Dharmapala, was to make the dynasty even more powerful. In the early part of his reign he was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king. However, Dharmapala reorganized his army and attacked Kanauj. The Palas organized their power partly by building a strong army and partly by making alliances with the neighbouring kingdoms. For example, a treaty of friendship was concluded between the Pala king and the king of Tibet. In addition, the Palas like the Cholas of south India took an interest in the Indian

trade with South-East Asia. They encouraged their merchants to take part in this trade.

But the Palas did not hold Kanauj for very long. The Pratiharas recovered their strength during the reign of king Bhoja. He ruled from about A.D. 836 to 882 and was the most renowned king of northern India at that time. He was a mighty warrior and recaptured Kanauj for the Pratiharas. However, when Bhoja tried to attack the Rashtrakutas, he was defeated by the famous Rashtrakuta king, Dhruva. An Arab merchant Sulaiman wrote an account of India in about 851. In it he refers to the king of 'Juzr' as a powerful king ruling over a rich kingdom. Historians believe that 'Juzr' was probably the Arabic name for Gujarat and the king described by Sulaiman was probably Bhoja. Bhoja is also remembered for his interest in literature and for his patronage of *vaishnavism*. Some of his coins have a picture of the *varaha* (boar) incarnation of Vishnu and he also took the title of *adivaraha*. There is a legend that he abdicated after a long reign, but this may not be true.

In 916, the Rashtrakutas reorganized their power and again attacked Kanauj. But by now all three of the kingdoms interested in Kanauj—the Rashtrakutas, the Palas and the Pratiharas—were exhausted by their continuous wars against each other. They were so busy fighting among themselves that

they did not realize how weak they had all become. Within a hundred years all three of these kingdoms had declined. The later Chalukyas were ruling in the area where the Rashtrakutas had ruled. The Pala kingdom was threatened by Chola armies and was later ruled by the Sena dynasty. The Pratihara kingdom was breaking up into a number of states some of which were associated with the rise of the Rajputs.

### The Rajputs

The Rajputs have a long and interesting history. Where they came from and who they were, remains something of a mystery. Historians think that some of them belonged to certain Central Asian tribes which settled in India after the Huns had invaded northern India. They were divided into clans. The Rajputs always insisted that they were of the *kshatriya* caste. Their kings ordered family histories to be written which connected them with either the sun-family (*surya-vamshi*) or the moon-family (*chandra-vamsha*) of ancient Indian kings. But there were four clans which claimed that they had not descended from either of these two families, but from the fire-family (*agni-kula*). These four clans were the most important in the history of this period. They were the Pratiharas (or Pariharas), Chauhans (or Chahamanas), Solankis (or Chaulukyas) and

Pawars (or Paramaras).

These four *agni-kula* clans established their power in western India and parts of central India and Rajasthan. The Pariharas ruled in the region of Kanauj. The Chauhans were strong in central Rajasthan. Solanki power rose in the region of Kathiawar and the surrounding areas. The Pawars established themselves in the region of Malwa with their capital at Dhar near Indore. Most of these dynasties began as small rulers under the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, and they later rebelled against their overlords and declared their independence.

Other minor rulers also became powerful and gradually built small kingdoms in various parts of northern India, such as those of Nepal, Kamarupa (in Assam), Kashmir, and Utkala (in Orissa). Many of the hill states of the Punjab came into being at this time, including Champaka (Chamba), Durgara (Jammu) and Kuluta (Kulu). But these kingdoms were either in the hills or else were far away from the Rajput kingdoms and did not therefore take part in the history of the Rajputs. The kingdoms which did take part were those of Central India and Rajasthan such as those of the Chandellas in Bundelkhand, or the Guhilas in Mewar to the south of the Chauhans. To the north-east of the Chauhans were the Tomaras and they ruled in Haryana and the region around Delhi. They



also began as small rulers under the Pratiharas, but they broke away when the Pratiharas became weak. The Tomaras built the city of Dhillika (Delhi) in A.D. 736. Later the Chauhans defeated the Tomaras and annexed their kingdom. It was a prince of the Chauhan dynasty, Prithviraj III, who is the hero of the famous ballad *Prithviraja-raso* composed later by the Hindi poet Chandbardai.

These kingdoms were always fighting each other largely to show of their strength. All these battles made them weak. When they were threatened by invasions from the north-west, they could not defend themselves properly. The first of these invaders was Mahmud of Ghazni.

### Mahmud of Ghazni

Ghazni was a small kingdom in Afghanistan which was founded by a



Mahmud Ghaznavi's Coin

Turkish nobleman in the tenth century. One of his successors Mahmud wanted to make Ghazni into a big and powerful kingdom, so he decided to conquer a part of Central Asia. But in order to do this he needed a large, well-equipped army. This in turn meant that he required money in order to pay the soldiers and buy the equipment. He had heard that the country neighbouring Afghanistan—India—was extremely rich. So he planned on raiding India in order to bring back wealth and thus build a large army to conquer Central Asia.

The first raid began in A.D. 1000. In a short period of twentyfive years Mahmud made seventeen raids. In between he fought battles in Central Asia and in Afghanistan. These raids terrified the inhabitants of northern India, particularly as he was after gold and money, and he destroyed anyone who tried to stop him. Later he annexed the Punjab and made it a part of his kingdom.

Between A.D. 1010 ad 1025, Mahmud attacked only the temple towns in northern India. He had heard that there was much gold and jewellery kept in the big temples in India, so he destroyed the temples and took away the gold and jewellery. One of these attacks which is frequently mentioned was the destruction of the temple in Somnath in western India. Destroying temples had another advantage. He

could claim, as he did, that he had obtained religious merit by destroying images.

In 1030 Mahmud died and the people of northern India felt relieved. Yet, although Mahmud was so destructive in India, in his own country he was responsible for building a beautiful mosque and a large library. He was the patron of the famous Persian poet, Firdausi, who wrote the epic poem *Shah Namah*. Mahmud also sent the Central Asian scholar Alberuni to India. Alberuni lived here for many years and finally wrote an excellent book on India, describing the country and the condition of the people.

### **Muhammad Ghori**

The raids of Mahmud of Ghazni were largely to obtain booty. But later towards the end of the twelfth century came the invasion of Muhammad Ghori. He was also the ruler of a small kingdom in Afghanistan. But he was interested in conquering northern India and adding it to his kingdom, and not merely in getting gold and jewellery. Punjab had already been a part of the Ghazni kingdom. This was useful to Muhammad Ghori in planning his campaign in India.

Muhammad's campaigns were well-organized and when he had conquered territory, he left a general behind to govern it in his absence. Muhammad

had often to face trouble in Afghanistan, so he was always going from Afghanistan to India and back. His most important campaign in India was against the Chauhan ruler, Prithviraj III. Muhammad defeated him in the second battle of Tarain in 1192. This opened the Delhi area to Muhammad and he began to establish his power. But in 1206 he was murdered. His territory in northern India was left in control of his general Qutb-ud-din Aibak.

This was the beginning of the Turkish rule at Delhi. The question is often asked as to how in a short period of fourteen years, the Turks had succeeded in conquering many of the important cities and trade routes of northern India. The answer lies not only in the political activities of the north Indian kingdoms but in the manner in which their economy and society was organized.

### **Economic Organization**

One of the biggest changes which took place in the medieval period was that the system of collecting revenue was no longer the same as it had been in the ancient period. Now the king did not have direct control over the revenue. This change affected other aspects of life as well.

We noticed in the Gupta period that some of the officers were not paid their

salaries in cash but in grants of revenue. That is, the revenue from a certain village or a piece of land was assigned or granted to an officer. The revenue was equal to the amount of money he would normally receive as salary. The officer did not at first have any rights of ownership over the land. He could only claim the revenue from the land. By the time we come to the medieval period many such officers had begun to claim that they owned the land as well. The systems of paying salaries by grants of revenue of land increased in the medieval period. Persons who received such grants, that is, the grantees of feudatories came to be called by various titles (some of which such as *rai* and *thakur* continued until receive times). The grantees were of various kinds. Some were officers, others were local chief who had been defeated in battle but were allowed to keep their land in the form of a grant. Another big group of grantees were *brahmins* and learned men who were often actually given the land as well as the right to collect the revenue from the land. Such grants were called *agrahara* or *brahmadeya* grants. The *brahmans* who received grants had no further obligations to the king. They and their families could live comfortably off the revenue of the land. This was much the same situation as that of the *brahmadeya* grants in south India. But the other grantees did have further obli-

gations to the king. The grantee collected the revenue from the peasant. He kept the major part of it for himself, but a small part of it he had to send to the king. He was also ordered to maintain troops for the king, which the king could demand whenever he wanted.

As the number of grantees increased, more and more land went into the hands of the grantees. Therefore the total amount of revenue which came to the king decreased. Sometimes a district containing a large number of villages would be granted to a high official, for example a minister. Since it was not possible for him to collect the revenue himself from all the villages, he would in turn grant the villages to persons subordinate to him who would collect the revenue from the peasants. Thus a number of intermediaries (or persons coming in between) came into existence between the peasant and the king.

This change in the system of revenue collection resulted in many other changes. The officers were now less dependent on the king. Those who had large grants of land often behaved like independent rulers. The peasants who cultivated the land began to pay more attention to the feudatories since they were the ones who had direct control over the peasants. In the earlier period the officers had collected the revenue in the name of the king. Now the revenue was being collected in the



name of the officer. So the king became someone who lived far away and had little to do with the peasants. Previously, all the revenue had gone to the king, so if he wanted to build a large strong army, he could spend an extra amount from the revenue on the army. But now the revenue was divided up between the feudatories and the king so the king could not spend extra amount on the army. This was on reason why the kingdoms of the north could not defend themselves properly against the Turkish attacks.

The relationship between the king and the feudatories became a difficult one. The king was supposed to have control over the feudatories, but they could be troublesome if they wished. A feudatory could weaken the position of the king if he was slow in sending the king's share of the revenue or if he cheated in supplying troops to the king when they were needed. The more the king depended on the feudatory, the weaker he became. Sometimes the king could take away the grant made to the feudatory. But this rarely happened, because the feudatory was usually powerful. Thus the king had to be very careful in dealing with him.

The feudatories were very jealous of each other. Although they were all working for the same king, they were often rivals. This rivalry led to many wars. They were quick to take offence if anything unpleasant was said or

done. Every dispute was settled through a fight, either a challenge from one feudatory to another or else a battle. Fighting was also a means of showing off. It therefore often became a useless way of spending revenue.

When a feudatory felt that he had become powerful enough, he would declare his independence from the reigning king and set up his own kingdom. Often the king was too weak and could do little to stop the feudatory. Thus the Rashtrakutas who began as feudatories of the Chalukyas, declared their independence and finally overthrew the Chalukyas. They were in turn overthrown by their feudatories, the later Chalukyas. Similarly the Chandellas declared their independence from the Pratiharas. In the same way the Cholas in the south had begun as feudatories. When a feudatory wished to declare his independence, he used high-sounding titles such as *maharajadhiraja* (the king of kings). Of course these titles were not precise but they sounded impressive.

The people who suffered most in this system were the peasants. They not only paid the revenue to the lord, but they had to do all kinds of free labour for him as well. Often the feudal lord made the peasants pay extra taxes too, such as taxes on using water for irrigation, roads, and mills. The peasant could not appeal to the king because the king's power over the

feudatory was limited. In these conditions it made little difference to him whether the king was Rajput or a Turk. The peasant just went on working harder and harder but remained generally poor.

### Society

In spite of the fact that the king's position, politically and economically, had become weaker now as compared to the earlier period, kings lived in great pomp and show. Much of their income was spent in building beautiful palaces and temples, in wearing costly clothes and jewellery and on the life of the court. The fashions set by the king were copied by the feudatories.

Attending the court of the king were not only the feudatories but also the wealthy *brahmins*. Many of them were rich and powerful since they too were grantees and owned land. They got more revenue from the land since they kept all of it for themselves and did not have to pay taxes to the king. Land owning *brahmins* lived in great comfort as they did not even cultivate the land themselves. It was cultivated by the *shudra* peasants for them. In return for the land they conducted the religious ceremonies and rituals for the king. Some also wrote biographies of the king and histories of the kingdom or poems in praise of the king. A number of *brahmins* were also employ-

ed as officers.

People living in the towns were still mainly artisans and traders. Trade with the Mediterranean world and western Asia was well developed largely due to the Arab traders living on the west coast of India. Indian goods were also being sent to towns in East Africa. India exported saffron, silk, cotton and woollen cloth, precious stones, scented wood and spices. The most important item which was brought into India were horses. These came from Central Asia and from Arabia and Indian merchants paid huge prices for good horses. Wine and dates were also imported in large amounts from western Asia.

Of all the groups in society, the *shudras* had the most difficult life. They were the poorest because most of them were either cultivators or peasants. All over the world at this time, the peasants were badly treated. The serfs in Europe, and the peasants in China also suffered. They were the ones who produced the food and therefore everyone was dependent on them. But in spite of this they had very few rights and could not appeal to anyone or protest against the hardships which they had to bear. In India, they were also looked down upon because of their low caste. Sometimes when they were very badly treated they tried to run away to a different part of the country. But even this was seldom

possible. Apart from the *shudras*, there were the untouchables who continued to do the lowly work.

### Education and Learning

The *brahmins* were responsible not only for performing the religious ceremonies but also for teaching. The schools were held in the temples where the higher caste children were taught. Most of them learnt Sanskrit and mathematics and read the religious books. At Nalanda (in Bihar), there was a famous Buddhist monastery and university. In the Gupta period there had been a keen interest in all aspects of learning, especially in science. But all this had now changed. The interest in science was declining. Indian scholars were not interested in making new discoveries. They were content to go on repeating what they already knew. Even the knowledge that they had, was often used for the wrong purposes. For example the discoveries of Aryabhata in astronomy were not used in order to make further discoveries about the earth and the sun and the universe. Instead they were mixed up with ignorant and superstitious ideas about astrology. Indian medical knowledge had been world famous, but now new knowledge in this subject was stopped because it was said that anyone who touched a dead body would lose caste. This was all most unfortunate because

in other parts of the world, especially in the Arab countries and in China, there was a great advance in knowledge during this period. India was therefore getting left behind.

Sanskrit was still the language of learning and of literature. Perhaps the most popular work in Sanskrit was the *Katha-saritasagara*, a collection of stories. Biographies of kings were also written, such as Bilhana's *Vikramanka-deva-charita*. Kalhana's remarkable history of Kashmir called the *Rajatarangini* was written in the twelfth century. The worship of Krishna had increased in northern India and the story of the love of Radha and Krishna was very popular. Many poems were written on this theme and Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* was one of these.

In addition to Sanskrit, other languages were developing. These were to become the languages with which we are familiar today as regional languages. They arose out of the *apabhramsha* languages spoken by the common people. *Apabhramsha* literally means something which is broken or crooked, and referred to the languages of the people as against classical Sanskrit which was the language of the educated higher castes. The early forms of Marathi and Gujarati were being spoken in western India and Bengali in eastern India.



## Religion

The development of these new languages was helped by the spread of *bhakti* teaching in Hinduism. This was begun by the Tamil devotional saints in south India and it slowly spread northwards. The *bhakti* teachers generally used the languages of the region because they frequently preached to the lower caste people—the artisans in the towns and the cultivators in the villages. It was in part the increasing popularity of the *bhakti* movement which led to the decline of Buddhism. In the medieval period Buddhism remained popular only in eastern India. Here it had the support of the Pala kings and the more wealthy merchants. Buddhism was no longer the simple religion which the Buddha had taught.

When the Turks attacked the monastery at Nalanda, the Buddhist monks fled to various parts of South-East Asia.

Both the *shaiva* and the *vaishnava* sects had large followings in northern India. The most frequent form in which Vishnu was worshipped was in his incarnation as Krishna. There were many legends about his life—his childhood amongst the cowherds of Mathura, his love for Radha and his fight against the wicked Kansa. These stories were recited as poems and also depicted in the sculpture on the temple walls. His incarnation of Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, was also popular.

## Architecture and Painting

Every important king and every powerful feudatory built a temple.

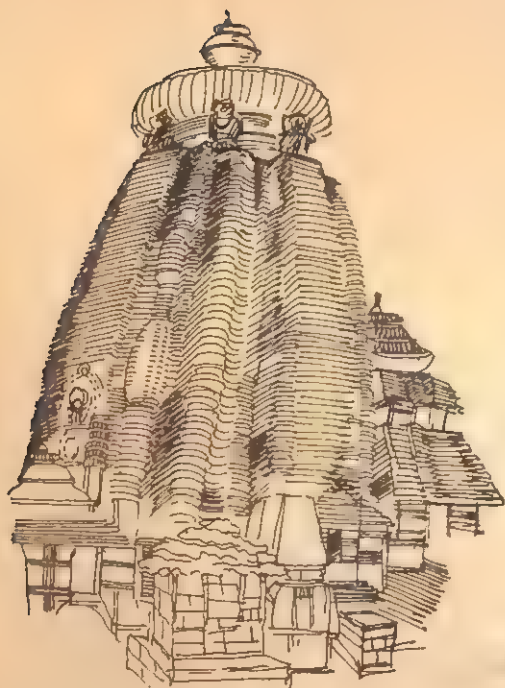
Sun Temple, Konark



There are many hundreds of temples, small and big, which belong to this period. In Orissa the more impressive looking ones are those at Puri and Bhubaneswar, and the Sun temple at Konarak. The temples at Khajuraho in Central India were built by the Chandella kings. Rajasthan and Gujarat

also boasted of many fine temples. At Mt. Abu (in Rajasthan) there is a group of Jaina temples built in white marble. Most of the Hindu temples were dedicated to either Shiva or Vishnu.

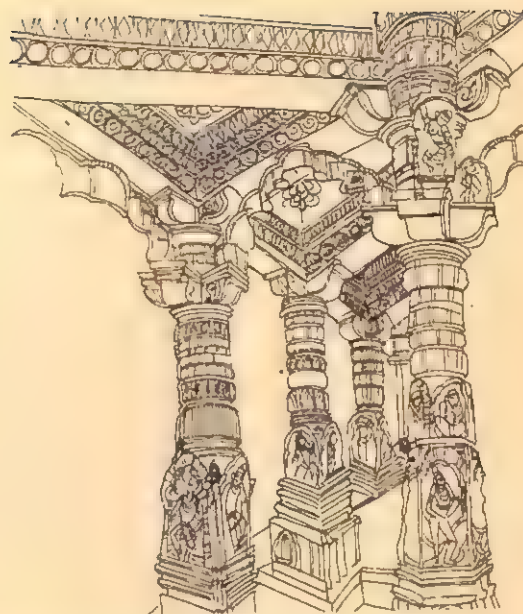
The Pala kings were patrons of Buddhism and Hinduism. Their religious buildings were ornamented with images of various deities either made of bronze or carved from a local black stone. Many of these images have been found in the neighbourhood of Nalanda.



Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar

Apart from architecture and sculpture the art of painting was also practised. The older tradition of mural painting continued to be used to decorate the walls of temples and palaces. There was another type of paintings which was started during this period and which was to become extremely popular in the later period of the Mughals. This was miniature painting, that is, painting tiny pictures as illustrations to books. The Jaina monks of western India and the Buddhists in Nepal and eastern India were very fond of illustrating their manuscripts. They painted small pictures on the palm-leaf page showing the scenes described in the text. At first the pictures were simple, but slowly they began to put in more and more details and colours, until each picture became a fine painting in itself.

The period from A.D. 800 to 1200 saw many changes in the social and economic life of the people. These changes created a new pattern of living. It was also the period which saw similar things happening in north and south India. This brought the various parts of the sub-continent closer together. This trend was strengthened under the Turkish and Afghan rulers who dreamt of ruling an all-India empire.



A Pillar of Jain Temple in Mount Abu



Kandaraya Mahadev Temple, Khajuraho



## Exercises

## I. Words and terms you should know :

1. *mlechchha*—A barbarian or outcaste
2. *surya-vamsha*—Sun-family
3. *chandra-vamsha*—Moon-family
4. *agni-kula*—Fire-family
5. *apabhramsha*—The language spoken by the common people

## II. Match the contents of column A with those of column B.

A	B
1. The Rashtrakutas were ruling in	1. Avanti and parts of southern Rajasthan.
2. The Pratiharas ruled in	2. the twelfth century.
3. The raids of Mahmud of Ghazni were largely to obtain	3. The northern Deccan in the region around Nasik.
4. Kalhana's remarkable history of Kashmir was written in	4. northern India.
5. Both the <i>shaiva</i> and the <i>vaishanava</i> sects had a large following in	5. booty.

## III. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.

1. Many of the campaigns in northern India were fought over the city of \_\_\_\_\_. (Tanjore, Nasik, Kanauj)
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ were ruling in the northern Deccan in the region around \_\_\_\_\_. (Pratiharas, Palas, Chalukias, Rashtrakutas, north India, central India, Bengal, Kanauj, Nasik)
3. The Palas ruled for about \_\_\_\_\_ hundred years and their kingdom consisted of almost the whole of \_\_\_\_\_. (one, two, four, Deccan, Bengal, Assam, Madras, Bihar, Orissa)
4. The Palas like the Cholas of \_\_\_\_\_ took an interest in the Indian trade with \_\_\_\_\_. (North India, Central India, Deccan, South India, North-East Asia, South-east Asia, Central Asia)
5. In a short period of \_\_\_\_\_ years Mahmud made \_\_\_\_\_ raids. (five, ten, fifteen, twentyfive, ten, twelve, seventeen, eighteen)

## IV. Answer the following questions:

1. What do you understand by the 'tripartite struggle' and what was its result?
2. What were the main causes that led Mahmud of Ghazni to attack India?
3. What was the difference between the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni and those of Muhammad Ghori?
4. In what way had the economic and administrative system changed during this period?

V. Interesting things to do :

1. On a map of Asia trace the route through which Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori invaded India, and indicate the places they attacked.
2. Try and collect some pictures of the Pala sculpture from Nalanda and of miniature paintings of this period.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Delhi Sultanate

### The Slave Sultans (A.D. 1206-1290)

The earliest rulers of the Delhi Sultanate were the Mamluks. They are also known as the Slave Kings because many of them were either slaves or were the sons of slaves who had become Sultans. The first of these kings was Qutb-ud-din Aibak, the general of Muhammad Ghori. On the death of Ghori, Qutb-ud-din decided to stay in India and establish a kingdom. The ruler of Ghazni tried to annex the territory held by Qutb-ud-din but failed. When Iltutmish succeeded Qutb-ud-din as Sultan, it was clear that northern India would be a separate kingdom. It was then that the new kingdom which is now called the Delhi Sultanate was established. The Sultans of Delhi gradually extended their control up to Bengal in the east and Sind in the west.

But it was not an easy job to rule over the Sultanate. The Sultan faced

two big problems. One concerned his own followers and the other the local rulers of northern India. There were many Turkish nobles and slaves from Central Asia who had settled in India. The Sultan parcelled out his territory among these nobles and in return they provided him with soldiers and assisted him in the administration of the Sultanate. As was the case in earlier times in northern India, only the revenue of the land was granted and not the land itself. In this way the Sultan thought he could keep control over the nobles. But the nobles were not always satisfied with their grants and the Sultan found it difficult to keep them contented.

There was also the problem of the local Indian rulers who had been conquered. Some had their land taken from them, and others were allowed to keep it. In the case of the latter they paid a sum of money as tribute and agreed to help the Sultan with military support when required. Among these



rulers were the Rajput chiefs who had been defeated. They gathered soldiers around them and kept harassing the armies of the Sultanate. However not all the Rajputs were hostile. Some established a friendly relationship with the Sultanate.

Further north there was new trouble. The rulers of Afghanistan were quiet, but the Mongol people of Central Asia, led by Chinghiz Khan, made fresh conquests. The area along the Indus river came under Mongol domination. Every now and then they would cross the river and attack the Punjab. For some years they actually conquered the Punjab and threatened the Sultanate.

These were some of the problems which the Sultan Iltutmish had to face. When he died, his daughter Razia had also to face these problems. Being a woman ruler, made it even more difficult for her. But she ruled for only a short while. After a number of less important Sultans came Balban, a strong and iron-willed Sultan.

Balban was more successful in solving these problems than Iltutmish had been. He defended the Sultanate from the attacks of the Mongols on the north. He fought against the local rulers who troubled him both within the Sultanate and on its borders. His biggest problem was that the nobles had become very powerful and were threatening the position of the Sultan.

Slowly but firmly, Balban broke their power and finally the position of the Sultan became all-important. He even managed to win the loyalty of the nobles. He succeeded partly because of the changes which he made in the organization of the army and the administration. He insisted that the Sultan must have full control over the army and the administration. He was thus able to curb any revolt among the nobles.

Balban believed that the power of the Sultan was absolute and that no one could challenge it. He had heard about the great emperors of Iran, the Achaemenids and the Sassanians and he modelled himself on them. He encouraged people to do the *sijdah* in his presence, that is, they had to kneel and touch the ground with their forehead in salutation to him. The orthodox Muslims were horrified at this, because according to Islam all men are equal, and therefore no one should do the *sijdah* before anyone else except God.

### The Khalji Sultans (A.D. 1290–1320)

The Slave Sultans were succeeded by a new dynasty of kings in 1290 called the Khaljis. Among them was the ambitious young man, Ala-ud-din, who became Sultan in 1296. Ala-ud-din had even bigger dreams than Balban. He wanted to become a second Alexander and conquer the world. He began by trying to establish an all-

India empire. For this he needed to do three things: to win the loyalty of the nobles and to curb their power, to conquer the Deccan and Rajasthan, and to force the Mongols to withdraw. (Even though the Mongols had by now been converted to Islam, they threatened the power of the Sultanate). But in order to do all this he also needed a large army. He gave presents of gold to the citizens when he became Sultan. Yet at the same time he made it clear that he was a strong and powerful ruler and that he would deal severely with anyone who showed signs of disloyalty.

A vast sum of money was required in order to maintain a large army. So Ala-ud-din had to think of ways of getting more revenue. He raised the land taxes on the wealthier people of the Doab (the fertile area between the Ganga and Yamuna rivers). In addition to this he kept a strict watch on the revenue which the nobles got from their land and did not allow them to keep anything which was not their due. The prices of goods were also controlled so that no one could make large profits and everyone could afford to pay the price demanded. Another important thing which he did was to order a new assessment of the cultivated land and the revenue. First the land under cultivation in his kingdom was measured. Then the revenue from the land was assessed on the basis of this measurement. By ordering this

new assessment he was also able to record the amount of revenue collected by various persons, and to keep a control on it.

The Mongols at this time had troubles of their own, so for a short while they ceased to be a danger to the Sultanate. Ala-ud-din could therefore give his full attention to the rulers of western India. He campaigned against the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa. He tried to establish his control over Rajasthan by capturing the famous forts of Ranthambhor and Chittor.

Ala-ud-din also sent a large army southwards under Malik Kafur. The intention was not only to conquer the peninsula but also to try and obtain money and wealth. Malik Kafur plundered in all directions and gathered together a large amount of gold from the various kingdoms of the south, including the Yadavas at Devagiri, the Kakatiyas at Warangal and the Hoyalas at Dvarasamudra. These rulers were allowed to keep their throne provided they paid a tribute. Malik Kafur even attacked the city of Madurai. No north Indian army had managed to come so far south before. Thus for a very brief period Ala-ud-din ruled over an empire almost as large that of Ashoka. However his control over the northern Deccan remained indirect.

The last of the Khaliji rulers was killed and another family—the Tughluqs—began to rule from Delhi.

### **The Tughluq Sultans (A.D. 1320-1399)**

The Tughluqs also wished to rule an all-India empire. To begin with they succeeded but soon the reverse began to happen. For a time they not only kept hold over the Deccan, but began to rule over it directly. This situation changed when the Sultanate gradually became weak. The governors of some of the more distant provinces and the southern areas, noticed the weakness of the Sultan and rebelled and finally set themselves up as rulers of independent kingdoms.

One of the more important Tughluq rulers was Muhammad-bin-Tughluq (1325-51). A wide variety of sources provide information on the reign of Muhammad. The North African Arab traveller, Ibn Battutah, was in India during this time and has left a detailed description of the condition of the country under Muhammad. Muhammad was a man of ideals and tried, as far as possible, to rule on the principles of reason. He had as advisers a mathematician and a logician. Many of his ideas were very sensible and rational but they did not work out well because he did not do the right things to make them work.

Muhammad wanted to conquer territory not only in India but also in Central Asia. This meant, as usual, a large army and therefore large amounts

of money to pay for the army. So in order to get more money, he increased the taxes which the peasants had to pay in the Doab area. What made it worse was that just then there was a famine in the Doab. The people naturally refused to pay the extra taxes and rose in rebellion. So ultimately the Sultan had to cancel his order.

Muhammad also transferred the capital from Delhi to Devagiri (which he renamed Daulatabad). Daulatabad (near modern Aurangabad) would have been a better place for controlling the Deccan. The moving of the capital was however not a success. It was too far from northern India and the Sultan could not keep a watch on the northern frontiers. So Muhammad returned to Delhi and Delhi became the capital once more. The southern kingdoms saw this as a sign of weakness on the part of the Sultanate. Soon after this two independent kingdoms arose in the Deccan—the Bahmani and the Vijayanagara kingdoms—and the Sultanate now had no say in the matters of the Deccan.

Another experiment which Muhammad tried also ended in failure. This was again a part of his attempt to obtain more money. The Sultan decided to issue 'token' coins in brass and copper which could be exchanged for silver coins from the treasury. This scheme would have worked if he had taken care to see that only the govern-



ment was issuing the 'token' coins so that some control could be maintained over the 'tokens'. But as it happened, many people started making brass and copper 'tokens' and the Sultan therefore had no control over the finances. The token coins had to be discontinued.

Unfortunately for Muhammad his policies tended to go wrong and he gradually lost the support not only of the people but also many of the nobles and the *ulema*. The *ulema* were the scholars of Islamic learning who were generally orthodox in their outlook. If he had had more cooperation from the nobles and the *ulema* and the people, he would have been better advised and some of his policies might have succeeded.

After Muhammad, his cousin Firoz

Shah came to the throne (1351-88). Firoz realized that one of the reasons for the failure of Muhammad was that he did not have the support of the nobles and the *ulema*. So Firoz made his peace with them and kept them content by giving them grants of revenue. He was lenient in his dealings with the nobles. He allowed the orthodox *ulema* to influence state policy in certain matters. He was less tolerant not only of the non-Muslim but also of those Muslims who were not orthodox. Thus Firoz improved his relationship with the powerful groups at the court but at the same time the power of the Sultan decreased.

Meanwhile the governors of certain provinces, in what is now Bihar and Bengal, had rebelled against the Sultanate. Firoz tried to bring them under

Back view of the Tomb of Firoz Tughluq in Hauz Khas, Delhi



control but was not very successful.

Firoz was concerned about the general welfare of his subjects. He improved parts of the kingdom by starting new irrigation schemes such as the building of canals. The Yamuna Canal is one of these. He also established new towns such as Ferozpur, Ferozabad, Hissar-Firoza and Jaunpur. He increased the number of educational centres and hospitals. Firoz was interested in the ancient culture of India. A number of books in Sanskrit including some of religion and philosophy were translated into Persian and Arabic at his orders. He also had two of the pillars of the emperor Ashoka brought to Delhi and one of them was placed on the roof of his palace.

The death of Firoz was followed by civil war among his descendents. The governors of many provinces became independent kings and finally only a small area around Delhi remained in the hands of the Tughluq Sultans.

### **The Break-up of the Delhi Sultanate**

In 1398, northern India once again felt the power of the armies of Central Asia. The Turkish chief Timur, the Lame or Tamerlane as he is sometimes called, led an army into India. His main purpose was to raid the north and go back to Central Asia with the loot. Timur's hordes poured into Delhi and looted the city and killed its

people. It was a dreadful thing to happen to any city. When they had looted enough they returned to Samarkand. As in the case of Mahmud of Ghazni, Timur also spent much of the loot from India in beautifying Samarkand with elegant buildings, palaces and mosques. He ruled over a large empire including parts of Central Asia and extending as far as Iran. This was also the time when the Turks were powerful in western Asia and had inherited both Byzantine and Arab culture.

But the Indian scene was sad and desolate. The Tughluq dynasty ended in 1413 and a local governor occupied Delhi. He declared himself Sultan and founded the Sayyid dynasty (1414-51). But this dynasty had a very short life. It gave way to another governor who usurped the throne of Delhi. He was an Afghan noble with the family name of Lodi.

### **The Lodi Dynasty (A.D. 1451-1526)**

The Lodi kings tried to consolidate the Sultanate. Attempts were made to curb the power of rebellious governors. A long struggle was carried out with the kingdom of Jaunpur and it was finally subdued. Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517) controlled the Ganga valley as far as western Bengal. He moved the capital from Delhi to a new town which later became famous as the city



Tomb of Sikander Lodi, Delhi

of Agra. He felt that he would be able to control the kingdom better from Agra. Sikandar also tried to strengthen the loyalty of the people by various measures of public welfare. Economic conditions were sought to be improved by maintaining a price control and trying to encourage low prices.

Since the Lodi kings were Afghans, much of their support depended on the loyalty of the Afghan nobles. These nobles were not very happy about the powerful status of the Sultan. Some of them showed their discontent through rebellion. The last of the Lodi Sultans, Ibrahim, was opposed by the leading Afghan nobles. Finally they plotted with Babar, the king of Kabul and succeeded in overthrowing Ibrahim in 1526.

### The Nobles

We have often referred to the nobles being powerful. Sometimes they influenced state policy. Sometimes as governors they revolted and became independent rulers or else usurped the throne of Delhi. Most of these nobles came of Turkish or Afghan families which had settled in India. Some of them were men who came to India in search of fortune and worked for the Sultan. Most of the officers who worked in the provinces, for instance the provincial governors and the military commanders, came from such families. After the time of Ala-ud-din Khaliji, Indian Muslims and Hindus were also appointed as officers.

The Sultan continued the earlier



system of granting the revenue from a piece of land or a village to an officer instead of paying him a salary. The grant was not hereditary and could be transferred from one officer to another. But as was the case in the earlier period, when the central authority became weak the grant began to be regarded as hereditary. The grant of revenue from a territory came to be called the *iqta* system. From the revenue which the officer collected, he kept a certain amount as his salary and another sum to maintain soldiers for the Sultan. The officer was expected to keep a detailed account of his income and expenditure. The officer was also responsible for maintaining law and order in the territory from which he collected the revenue. Sometimes the system was different. The amount which the officers sent to the Sultan was fixed and had to be paid annually. In spite of this the nobles always had enough money for themselves and lived in great luxury. Some of them were however often in debt to the Hindu bankers.

### The Administration of the Sultanate

The administration of the Sultanate was concerned mainly with the work of collecting and recording the revenue from the land, and of course maintaining law and order. Some of the land was reserved and came directly under

the control of the Sultan. The revenue from this land was used for the Sultan's personal expenses. The amount of revenue from such lands was fixed at one-third of the produce and this was the share of the state. The revenue was collected by local officials working in the village and the district. These officials worked in the same way as they had done before the coming of the Turks and the Afghans. The pattern of administration did not change in the villages. There were a number of officials doing this work, such as the *muqaddam* who was the hereditary headman of the village, the *patwari* who kept the local records and the *mushrif* who supervised the accounts and attended to the revenue when it was collected. The records were written in the *bahi* and *khata* of the *patwari*. Many of the names of these village officers are used to this day.

At the court too there were officers who kept records of the revenue. The most important of these officers were the *wazir* and the *bakshi* (pay-master) of the army. The *wazir* and his officers checked the revenue when it came in, and kept a record of the grants.

There were other officers at the court who looked after various aspects of administration. Some were in charge of matters relating to the army and the equipment for the army. Some were concerned with the relationship bet-

ween the Sultanate and the other states. The chief *qazi* was the chief judge and also gave advice in religious matters. The *wazir* supervised the work of all these officers. The Sultan depended a great deal on the efficiency of the *wazir* and on his advice. But the final decisions were always taken by the Sultan.

### The New Kingdoms

As the power of the Sultanate gradually declined a number of new kingdoms arose in various parts of the sub-continent. Most of them began as provinces of the Sultanate which gradually became independent.

In western India there were the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa. Ahmed Shah who founded the city of Ahmedabad was also responsible for strengthening the power of Gujarat. Malwa became important during the reign of Hushang Shah, who built the beautiful fortress city of Mandu. Gujarat and Malwa were constantly at war with each other and this tended to reduce their power. The same was true of the two Rajput kingdoms of Mewar and Marwar. They were also continually fighting, although the two royal families had been united in marriage. This was another case of Rajput rulers fighting with each other and not with the Sultanate alone. Rana Kumbha of Mewar is remembered to this day. He was a man of many interests, being a poet and musician as well as a ruler. A number of other kingdoms in Rajasthan

were also founded around this time such as Bikaner.

The kingdom of Kashmir came into prominence. The most popular of the kings of Kashmir was Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as 'Budshah' who ruled in the fifteenth century. He encouraged scholarship in both Persian and Sanskrit as did Firoz Tughlaq of the Sultanate. To this day, people say that 'Budshah' was a good ruler because he was concerned about the welfare of his subjects.

In eastern India the two important kingdoms were those of Jaunpur and Bengal. Both of these were founded by governors of the Delhi Sultan who had later rebelled against the Sultanate. Jaunpur was ruled by the Sharqi kings, whose ambition it was to capture Delhi. They never actually did so. Jaunpur was later to become an important centre of Hindi literature and learning. Bengal was ruled by kings of different races. They were mainly Turks and Afghans, with short periods when a local chief and later an Abyssinian captured the throne. All these kings were patrons of local culture and encouraged the use of the Bengali language.

In the Deccan and further south there arose two kingdoms, one of which came to be known as the Bahamani kingdom and the other was the kingdom of Vijayanagara. They both arose when the control of the Sultanate over the Deccan became weak during the



Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.

© Government of India copyright, 1988.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.





Victory Tower, Chittorgarh

reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. Again, both these kingdoms were founded by officers of the Sultanate who had rebelled against the Sultan.

The Bahmani kingdom was founded by a man called Hasan Gangu, who worked as an officer under Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. Hasan led a rebellion against the Sultan and proclaimed the independence of the Bahmani kingdom in 1347. He took the title of Bahman Shah and became the first ruler of the dynasty. The Bahmani kingdom included the whole of the northern Deccan up to the river Krishna.

South of this lay the kingdom of Vijayanagara. This was founded by two brothers Harihara and Bukka. They also noticed the declining strength of the Sultanate. They conquered the territory of the Hoysalas (in modern Mysore State) and declared themselves

the rulers of the independent kingdom of Vijayanagara in 1336. They made Hastinavati (modern Hampi) their capital. Had the Bahmani and Vijayanagara kingdoms been friendly towards each other, they could have become very powerful. But unfortunately they were always at war. There were many reasons for this. One was that both kingdoms claimed the Raichur Doab as part of their territory. This was the rich and fertile land between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers which also lay in between the two kingdoms. Another reason was that Golconda in the Bahmani kingdom had diamond mines and the kings of Vijayanagara were eager therefore to conquer Golconda. Yet another reason was that the rulers of both kingdoms were very ambitious and wished to control the peninsula.

The wars were not limited to only two big kingdoms. The smaller kingdoms of the peninsula also had to take sides and fight. There were kingdoms all along the east coast, such as those of Orissa, Andhra and Madurai. These kingdoms suffered because they were being constantly attacked by either the Bahmanis or the rulers of Vijayanagara. Vijayanagara conquered Madurai in 1370. It was also active on the west coast. Revatidvipa (modern Goa) was also annexed and this was an important trade centre. Meanwhile the Bahmani kingdom was busy fighting against its northern neighbours, the



Coin of Bahmani King Firoz Shah



Elephant Stable, Hampi

kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa.

All these kingdoms of the subcontinent became powerful because their income came from two sources. One was land revenue and in the more fertile areas such as Jaunpur, this was a rich source of income. The other source was trade. Gujarat and Bengal obtained large profits from overseas trade with western Asia, East Africa, South-East Asia and China. The Bahmani and Vijayanagara kingdoms also took part in this trade. Rajasthan

and Malwa flourished on the trade within the sub-continent. Since goods were being transported to various parts of the sub-continent, traders often travelled through these regions. These kingdoms were not as powerful politically as the Delhi Sultanate had been. But it was in many of these areas that the earlier culture now developed and became mature. Literature in the regional languages, architecture, paintings and new religious ideas, all developed in these kingdoms.

### Exercises

- I. Words and terms you should know:
  1. *sijdah*—A form of salutation in which the person concerned had to kneel and touch the ground with his forehead.
  2. *ulema*—Scholars of Islamic learning who were generally orthodox in their outlook.
  3. *iqta*—The grant of revenue from a village or a piece of land.
  4. *patwari*—The official who kept the local records.
  5. *wazir*—Chief minister and adviser to the Sultan.
- II. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.



1. Balban faced the problems which \_\_\_\_\_ had faced but he was more successful in solving them. (Qutb-ud-din, Iltutmish, Ala-ud-din, Kakatiyas, Yadavas)
2. The earliest rulers of the Delhi Sultanate were the \_\_\_\_\_. (Afghans, Turks, Mongols)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ sent a large army southwards under Malik Kafur. (Balban, Raziya, Ala-ud-din)
4. The north African Arab traveller \_\_\_\_\_ has left a detailed description of the condition of India under \_\_\_\_\_. (Hoysalas, Kakatiyas, Chenghiz Khan, Ibn Battutah, Qutb-ud-din, Ala-ud-din, Muhammad-bin-Tughluq)
5. The Bahmani kingdom covered the area roughly of the \_\_\_\_\_ and extended as far as the river Krishna. (eastern Deccan, southern Deccan, northern Deccan)

III. Which of the statements given below are correct? Answer 'yes' or 'no' after each statement.

1. Balban was a strong and iron-willed Sultan.
2. Ala-ud-din lost the territories of the far south and his control over the northern Deccan remained loose and indirect.
3. The Slave sultans were succeeded by a new dynasty of kings in 1290 called the Tughluqs.
4. The last of Khalji rulers was killed and another family, the Sayyids, began to rule from Delhi.
5. Muhammad-bin-Tughluq issued 'token' coins in brass and copper which could be exchanged for silver coins from the treasury.
6. The Bahmani kingdom was founded by a man called Hasan Gangu, who worked as an officer under Ala-ud-din.

IV. Answer the following questions:

1. Who was Balban? What problems had he to face in order to consolidate the Sultanate?
2. Many of the ideas of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq were very sensible and rational but they did not work well. What were these ideas and why did Muhammad fail?
3. Ala-ud-din wanted to become a second Alexander and conquer the world. What steps did he take to achieve his aims? How far did he succeed?
4. How was the administration of the Delhi Sultanate organized?
5. What do you understand by the iqta system?

V. Interesting things to do :

1. As the power of the Sultanate declined a number of new kingdoms arose in various parts of the sub-continent. Make a list of these new kingdoms and locate them on a map of India.
2. On a map of Asia indicate the route through which Tamerlane reached Delhi.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# The Life of the People

When a foreign people conquer a country and settle down in it they bring with them new patterns of living. These patterns influence the culture of the country which has been conquered. Often it happens the other way round as well. The culture of the conquered country influences the way of life of the conquerors. In the case of the Turks and Afghans, both these things happened. They had modelled themselves on the emperors of Iran. They brought these ideas with them from Iran and Central Asia. When they had settled in India, the Indian way of the life began to influence their thinking and behaviour as well. At the same time the coming of Turks and the Afghans led to a number of developments in Indian society. These developments and changes manifested themselves in various spheres of life and in course of time a number of practices came to acquire a certain uniformity among the mass of the people.

During the period of the Sultanate,

society was divided into four major groups—the aristocracy and the priests who held the highest position, and the towns people and the peasants.

### The Aristocracy

The aristocracy was the ruling class and consisted of the Sultan, the nobles, the Hindu princes and the landholders. The Sultan lived in great splendour at the court in Delhi. Whenever a new Sultan came to the throne, the *khutba* or sermon on the occasion of Friday prayers, was read in his name and coins were issued from the mint with his name on them. In this way the fact of a new ruler having come to the throne was established. The Sultan was a special person and each day his activities at the court were carried out with much ceremony and ritual to emphasize his special qualities. He had a large household with many officers and servants. He also had many slaves to do his work. The nobles too, in

imitation of the Sultan, lived in great luxury.

### The Priests

The priests and the teachers of religion such as the *brahmins* and the *ulema* were also an important part of society. Those who acted as advisers to the rulers, had a tremendous influence. Some of them were wealthy as they had received grants of land. The Sultans respected the important *brahmins* and continued to give them grants of land. Amongst both the *brahmins* and the *ulema* there were those who had settled down in the rural areas. In this way each helped to spread Hindu and Islamic culture. There were some people however who were not satisfied with the behaviour of the priests, both Hindu and Muslim. It was felt that the priests were not sufficiently interested in religion. They were more interested in wordly matters.

### The People of Towns

The development of trade led to an increase in the number of towns during this period. The people living in the towns were largely the merchants, traders and artisans, with some nobles and officials. Most towns were trading centres. Some were administrative and military centres and these had a larger number of officials and soldiers. Similarly towns which were places of reli-

gious pilgrimage were crowded with pilgrims and priests.

The artisans lived according to their craft in a special part of the city. For instance, the weavers lived in one part, those that made brass pots lived in another, the goldsmiths inhabited a separate area, and so on. In many cities and towns even today, we find localities called after the type of artisans or merchants who lived there at one time. The artisans supplied the nobles and their families with whatever they needed, both luxuries such as rich silks and brocades and necessities such as pottery. The artisans also manufactured goods which were sent to other parts of the country or even overseas and became the basis of trade. Many hundreds of slaves were employed by the Sultans in the *karkhanahs* (workshops) for the production of a variety of things.

### The Peasants

The life of the peasants—life in the villages—continued much as before. The changes introduced with the coming of the Turks and Afghans were limited to the upper strata of society.

The caste system still remained an important feature of society. Even those who were converted to Islam, often continued to remember their caste and observed the rules of marriage as before. Among the nobles too there was much inter-marriage between



the Turks and Afghans and the Hindus who had been converted to Islam, so naturally customs and ideas were exchanged. Many Muslim customs became a part of Hindu life and many Hindu customs were found in Muslim life.

### Trade

Every town had a market-place where the traders would gather to buy and sell their goods. Large fairs were also common. But there were some communities who made trade their special work. These were communities such as the *baniyas* and the *multanis*, who showed great initiative and travelled all over the country, even as far south as Malabar. The *banjaras* owned large caravans and transported goods from market to market.

Ibn Battutah has described Delhi as the most magnificent city he ever visited. To Delhi came goods from all over—large mounds of white rice from the east, sugar from Kanauj, wheat from the Doab and fine silks from the south, not to mention cotton textiles, metalware, jewellery, ivory, etc.; also cargoes from Arabia, East Africa, Shrivijaya and China. Bengal was the main centre of the trade with China. Many Chinese merchants and missions visited Bengal in the fifteenth century and there are descriptions of Bengal in Chinese sources.

The growth of trade encouraged the use of money. Large numbers of coins were minted and issued. The most commonly used coin was the silver *tankah* which was started by the Sultan Iltutmish. It was from this coin that the silver rupee has descended. The system of weights used at this time remained current in northern India until the recent adoption of the metric system.

### Religion

The coming of Islam to India resulted in many things. One of the more interesting was the borrowing of religious ideas by Hindus and Muslims from each other. This in turn led to two religious trends becoming very popular. One was the *sufi* movement and the other came to be called the *bhakti* movement.

### The Sufis

Among the Muslims who had come from Persia and other lands in the eleventh century were some *sufis*. They settled in various parts of India and soon had many Indian followers. The *sufi* emphasized love and devotion as a means of coming nearer to God. If one truly loved God then one came close both to God and to one's fellow men. Prayers, fasts and rituals were not so important as the true love of

God. Because of the emphasis on love they were tolerant of other religions and sects, and believed that the paths to God can be many. They also emphasized respect for all human beings. The orthodox *ulema* did not approve of the *sufis* because they maintained that some *sufi* teachings were not in agreement with orthodox Islam. A large number of Hindus also venerated the *sufi* saints. The *sufis* felt that it was necessary for people to follow the teachings of a *pir*, who was rather like the Hindu *guru*. People from nearby towns and villages would come to the *pir* to hear him preach. The *sufis* did not try to convert Hindus to Islam but advised Hindus to be better Hindus by loving the one true God.

Muin-ud-din Chishti was one of the better known *sufi* saints. He is asso-

ciated with the city of Ajmer where he died in 1236. He maintained that devotional music was one way of coming close to God. If music was beautifully played or sung, it was almost like being in the presence of God. The *ulema* did not approve of linking music with religion. Chishti's followers held gatherings where some of the finest music could be heard. The *qawwali* was a familiar form of singing at these gatherings. Songs sung in Hindi were also popular.

Another important *sufi* saint was Baba Farid who lived at Ajodhan (or Pak Patan now in Pakistan). There were others in other parts of India such as Saiyid Muhammad Gesudaraz at Gulbarga, Shah Alam Bukhari at Gujarat, Baha-ud-din Zakariya at Multan and Shaikh Shihab-ud-din

Tomb of Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chisti, Ajmer



Suhrawardi at Sylhet. The one *sufi* saint whom both the Sultans and the public respected was Nizam-ud-din Auliya who had his centre in the neighbourhood of Delhi. He was a brave and honest man and spoke his mind freely. If he did not like any action of the Sultan he said so and was not afraid as were so many other people.

### The Bhakti Movement

The *sufis* were not the only popular religious teachers of the time. There were also the *bhakti* saints. They had a longer history in India. The *alvars* and the *nayannars* of the Tamil devotional cult had started the tradition of preaching the idea of *bhakti* through hymns and stories. This movement had been popular with the merchants and artisans in the towns and the peasants in the villages. The *bhakti* movement continued the same teaching. Most of the saints were from the non-brahman castes. The *bhakti* teachers also taught that the relationship between man and God was based on love, and worshipping God with devotion was better than merely performing any number of religious ceremonies. They stressed the need for tolerance among men and religions.

Chaitanya was a religious teacher who preached in Bengal. He became a devotee of Krishna and composed many hymns to Krishna. He would

gather together a group of people to whom he preached and to whom he taught the hymns. He travelled in various parts of the country and then settled at Puri, in Orissa. In Maharashtra, *bhakti* was preached by Jnaneshvara. He also rewrote the *Gita* in Marathi so that the ordinary people who had not been educated in Sanskrit could understand the *Gita*. Even more popular were Namadeva and in a later period Tukaram, both of whom continued to preach the idea of devotion to God through love.

In Banaras there was a weaver called Kabir who was also a *bhakti* saint. The *dohas* or couplets which Kabir composed and taught to his followers are still recited. Kabir tried to make a bridge between Hinduism and Islam. He felt that religious differences do not matter, for what really matters is that everyone should love God. God has many names. Some call him Rama, others Rahim. Some call him Hari, others Allah. So why should people fight over the name of God. The followers of Kabir formed a separate group known as *Kabirpanthis*. At a later period Surdas and Dadu continued the *bhakti* tradition.

There was another religious teacher who was as important as Kabir and whose followers some centuries later became very powerful in northern India. This was Nanak who founded the Sikh religion. According to the





Guru Nanak with his Disciples  
(Based on an old Picture)

Sikh tradition, Nanak was the son of a village accountant and lived in the Punjab. Nanak's brother-in-law helped him to get employment in the office of the local governor, Daulat Khan Lodi, but Nanak's heart was not in his work. So he left his job and travelled all over the country. Guru Nanak finally returned and settled down at Kartarpur now called Dera Baba Nanak. His teachings in the form of verses are

included in a scripture called the *Adi Granth* which was compiled by his fourth successor in the early 17th century. Nanak taught that the only way to be close to God is to love God. He stated firmly that between human beings there should be no caste differences. Nanak insisted that his followers must be willing to eat in a common kitchen—*langar*—where anyone could take a meal no matter what his caste. He grouped his followers together and before his death appointed a *guru* to be their leader. The followers of the tenth *guru* came to be known as the *khalsa* which means "the pure". In the seventeenth century the *khalsa* was to become a strong military group. It was then that the Sikhs distinguished themselves from other people by the five characteristics which are commonly called the five K's—*kesha* (hair), *kangha* (comb), *kara* (iron bracelet), *kripan* (dagger) and *kachchha* (underwear).

The *bhakti* movement was not only a religious movement. It also influenced social ideas. The earlier *bhakti* teachers such as those of the Tamil devotional cult and saints such as Chaitanya were largely concerned with religion. But Kabir and Nanak in particular also had ideas on how society should be organized. They both objected to the division of society into castes. They disapproved of the low status given to women. They encouraged

women to join their menfolk in various activities. When the followers of Kabir and Nanak gathered together, women were included in the gathering. Some of the finest hymns were composed by a woman—Mirabai. She was a princess from Rajasthan who gave up her life of luxury and became a devotee of Krishna.

### Language and Literature

The *bhakti* teachers throughout India always taught in the language of the region so that the ordinary people could understand them. The languages which the people spoke were something like our present Indian languages. In fact our languages have developed from these early forms. The two forms of Hindi, Braj and Avadhi, were used. Punjabi was beginning to emerge in the north; Gujarati in western India and Bengali in eastern India, Marathi in the north-west Decan, Kannada in the region around Mysore, Telugu in Andhra and of course Tamil had been spoken for many centuries in the region south of Andhra. Oriya (spoken in Orissa), Assamese and Sindhi had their origin about this time as also did Malayalam in Kerala. Some of these languages grew out of *apabhramshas* and *Prakrits*.

Since the court language in most parts of the country was now Persian, many of the regional languages were

influenced by Persian and Persian words came into their vocabularies. Out of the mixture of Persian and Hindi there grew a new language—Urdu. The word Urdu literally means 'camp' and Urdu was the language used by the soldiers with different mother tongues in talking to one another. The grammar was the same as that of Hindi, but the words were taken from Persian, Turkish and Hindi. The Urdu that was spoken in the Deccan was however more strongly influenced by Telugu and Marathi. Gradually Urdu was to become the most commonly spoken language in the towns. Along the west coast, Arabic was used by the traders from western Asia and Arabic influenced the local languages as well.

Sanskrit continued to be used by a limited number of people. It was used in the religious rituals of the *shaivites* and *vaishnavites*, it was also used on ceremonial occasions in the courts of certain Hindu rulers, such as the kings of Vijayanagara. It remained a language of higher learning. Much of the popular literature in Sanskrit such as the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* was now available in the regional languages. The writings of Kamban in Tamil and Pothana in Telugu made their works available to people who did not know Sanskrit. These texts were now familiar not only in the Indian languages, but in Persian



Qutb Minar and the ruins of a Mosque,  
Delhi

and Arabic as well.

Literature at this time did not consist only of translations and adaptations of Sanskrit works. There were a number of poets and writers, who wrote original works—epic poems, lyric poems, plays—in the various languages. The Telugu poet, Srinadha composed many poems in honour of Shiva such as the *Haravilasa*. Malik Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmavat* is famous in Hindi

as also are the poems of Vidyapati in Maithili. Some of the poets and writers were influenced by Persian literature. Amir Khusrau for instance wrote most



Malik Muhammad Jayasi  
(Based on an old Painting)

of his poetry in Persian, but the theme was often his love for India and his pride in being an Indian.

### Architecture

The Turks and Afghans brought





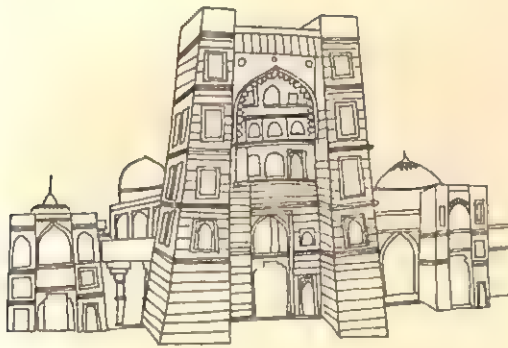
Tomb of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq

with them from Persia and Central Asia, new styles and techniques of architecture as well. These were merged with the older Indian styles and a new type of architecture came into shape. The two most important architectural forms which began to be widely used were the true arch and the dome. The true arch is a pointed arch which is not supported by a beam but by stones placed obliquely to form the point. The dome is a large area enclosed by a hollow semi-circular roof. Both these forms were based on advanced mathematical knowledge and engineering skill. Before the coming of the Turks, Indian architects, although they knew of the true arch, did not experiment very much with this knowledge and

skill. In earlier buildings therefore, there was no dome, only towers and spires. The arches too were built by placing a beam across two upright pillars. After the coming of the new styles, both the dome and the true arch were widely used in mosques, palaces, tombs and in course of time, in private houses as well. Another structure which was frequently used was the tall, slender tower or minaret.

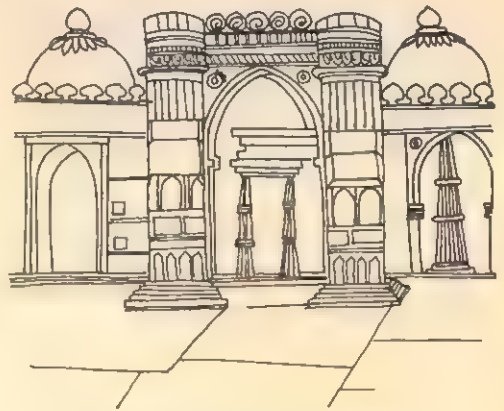
The shape of these buildings was often similar to those of Persia and Central Asia, but the decoration was largely Indian because Indian craftsmen used to construct the buildings. The coming together of the two resulted in some beautiful structures. The Qutb Minar with the mosque nearby

at Delhi was the earliest of these, having been built in the reigns of the Mamluks. The Delhi Sultans lived in great splendour and built themselves fine palaces. The citadel of Firoz Tughluq, known as Firoz Shah Kotla is an example of this, as also the fort at Tughluqabad. The tombs of the Lodi kings at Delhi must have been even more beautiful in the past when the outer surface of their domes was covered with a colourful design in tiles and gave to the building a glow of bright colours—turquoise blue, green, yellow, pink and a large range of more delicate shades.



Atala Masjid, Jaunpur

Delhi was not the only place where these new buildings would be seen. The mixing of Indian and Persian styles led to a variety of experiments and shapes in buildings. The provincial



Jama Masjid, Ahmadabad

dynasties also beautified their capitals and forts. The Sharqi rulers of Jaunpur built beautiful mosques in that city. Ahmed Shah of Gujarat built Ahmedabad, which was then one of the most elegant cities of India. The rulers of Malwa built their palaces on the hill at Mandu. Most of these buildings were built of stone because stone was easily available in these areas. But in Bengal at places such as Gaur and Pandua the construction was of bricks. Stone is not so easily found all over eastern India. In Kashmir the architects followed the Central Asian pattern and



Jahaz Mahal, Mandu

built in wood. Wherever trade prospered and wealth poured in, kings and nobles put up new buildings.

The Bahmani rulers competed with the Delhi Sultanate in this. The capital cities of Gulbarga and Bidar boasted



Dakhil Darwaza at Gaur, Bengal



Jama Masjid, Srinagar



of many fine buildings. Some of these continued the older style of architecture. Others were built in the Persian style such as the Jama Masjid of Gulbarga and the Madrasah at Bidar. Perhaps the best known of these buildings was to be the Gol Gumbaz at Bijapur, the tomb of one of the Bijapuri kings. Its dome is said to be one of the largest in the world. Even inside their forts, the kings of the Deccan built magnificent buildings. The forts at Daulatabad and Golconda are examples of this.

Further south, the Vijayanagara kings gave large donations for building temples. Visiting merchants and travelers from outside India such as Duarte Barbarosa, Nunez and Paes have des-

cribed in glowing terms the wealth and grandeur of the city of Hampi. The Vijayanagara kings spent vast sums of money on repairing and rebuilding parts of the earlier Chola temples. The work of the Vijayanagara period can be recognized by the richness of the carving and ornamentation. This was also true of the Pandya kings of Madurai.

### Painting and Music

The earlier tradition of painting delicate miniature paintings was continued. The artists were now decorating books belonging to the king and the courtiers and were therefore employed by the king. Sometimes they painted

Gol Gumbaz, Bijapur



portraits of the king and sometimes their paintings were used to illustrate books.

Music also came to be enriched by new forms. The Hindustani style of music which developed at this time was influenced by forms from Persia and the Arab world. In addition there were certain instruments which became popular such as the *sitar*, *sarangi* and

*tabla*. The interest of some *sufis* in music also helped to make these new forms popular.

The coming of the Turks and Afghans led to many experiments with new patterns of living. Many of these resulted in the development of religious movements, languages and beautiful new forms in painting, architecture and music.

### Exercises

#### I. Words and terms you should know:

1. *khutba*—A sermon read in the name of the ruling king on the occasion of Friday prayers.
2. *banjaras*—A group of merchants who owned large caravans and transported goods from market to market.
3. *sufis*—Muslim devotees who emphasized the personal devotion of man to God through love.
4. *pirs*—Religious teachers of the *sufis*.
5. *dohas*—Couplets which Kabir composed and taught to his followers.
6. *Adi-granth*—A religious book of the Sikhs in which the teaching of Nanak was collected in the form of verses.

#### II. Match the contents of column A with those of column B.

- A
1. The aristocracy was the ruling class and consisted of
  2. The priests and teachers of religion such as the *brahmins* and the *ulema* were
  3. Many Muslim customs became a part of Hindu life and many Hindu customs were
  4. The Turks and Afghans brought with them from Persia and Central Asia.
  5. In Kashmir architecture followed the Central Asian pattern and mosques

- B
1. new styles of architecture.
  2. were often built in wood.
  3. the Sultans, the nobles and the Hindu princes.
  4. adopted by the Muslims.
  5. an important part of society.

## The Life of the People

III. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.

1. The sufis were Muslim devotees who emphasized \_\_\_\_\_ as a means of coming nearer to God. (hate, prayer, love, ritual, fasting)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ was a \_\_\_\_\_ teacher who taught in Bengal. (Kabir, Muin-ud-din, *bhakti*, *ulema*, Chaitanya, *sufi*)
3. Ahmed Shah of \_\_\_\_\_ built \_\_\_\_\_ which was one of the most elegant cities of \_\_\_\_\_. (Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Calcutta, Poona, Ahmedabad, Africa, Deccan, India)
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ kings gave large donations for building temples. (Bahmani, Vijayanagara, Sultanate)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ wrote most of his poetry in Persian, but the theme was often his love for \_\_\_\_\_ and his pride in being an Indian. (Kabir, Nanak, Muin-ud-din Chisti, Amir Khusrau, Afghanistan, Kannada, India)

IV. Answer the following questions:

1. Who were the people that constituted the aristocracy of the Sultanate?
2. What was the teaching of the *sufis*? Name some of the important *sufi* saints of India.
3. Who was Kabir? Write a few lines on his teachings.
4. Who was the founder of the Sikh religion? What did he preach?
5. Mention some of the important developments which took place in the languages of India during this period?
6. In what way did the coming of the Turks and Afghans influence architecture and music?

V. Interesting things to do:

1. Read some of the verses of the *sufis* and the *bhakti* teachers. Which do you prefer and why?
2. Visit some of the monuments in your town and see if you can recognize the architectural style.



## CHAPTER SIX

# The Coming of the Mughals and the Europeans

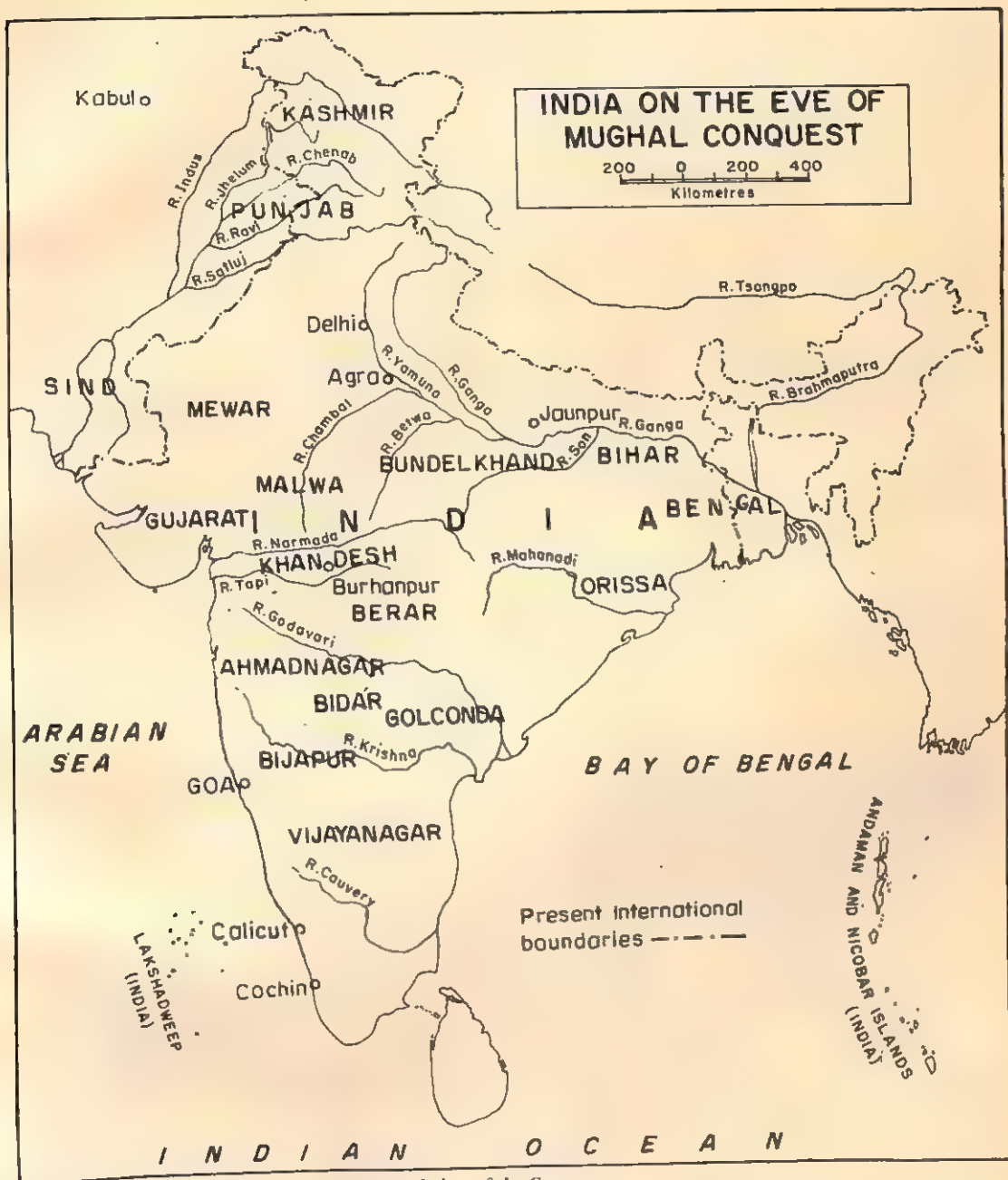
The Lodi dynasty was the last dynasty to rule from Delhi before the Mughals conquered northern India. The Sultanate had become small and weak, since many of its provinces had broken away and set themselves up as independent kingdoms.

### Babar

In 1526, a battle was fought on the famous plain of Panipat when Babar defeated the Lodi army. Part of the reason why he was successful was that he had brought artillery from Central Asia and this was new to the Indian army. Babar had a smaller but better trained cavalry. He arranged his soldiers in such a way that they could be easily moved from one part of the battle to another. And of course he was a good general. He knew how to use his soldiers to the best advantage. Having defeated the Lodis, Babar did not merely take his share of wealth and return to Kabul as the nobles had thought he would. Babar decided to stay on in India. So he occupied Delhi and Agra. Now the Afghan nobles and Rana Sanga turned against him. They tried to stop him from annexing more territory, but he defeated them all.

However, he did not live for very long after this. He died in 1530. He

The Lodi kings tried to make the nobles feel the power of the Sultan. But the nobles did not like this. They had got used to their own independent power. So they decided that they would get rid of the Lodi kings. They plotted with the ruler of Kabul, Babar, and asked him for help. Babar was a descendant of Timur. Babar had carried out raids as far as the Indian frontier and knew that India was a rich and fertile land. So when the nobles asked for help, he agreed and brought his army into the Punjab. The Afghan nobles were not the only ones who were plotting against the Lodi king. One of the Rajput princes Rana Sanga of Mewar had also offered to help Babar against the Lodis.



Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.

© Government of India copyright, 1988.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

had made himself master of the Punjab, Delhi and the Ganga plain as far as Bihar. Babar was not merely a brilliant general who knew how to organize his army and fight. He was a poet and a writer with an excellent style in Turkish. He kept a diary in which he recorded his thoughts and referred to various events. He was particularly moved by natural beauty—mountains, trees, flowers and animals. This was why he was always keen to make gardens in all the places where he lived. He enjoyed playing polo and the game became increasingly popular amongst the Indian nobles.

### Humayun

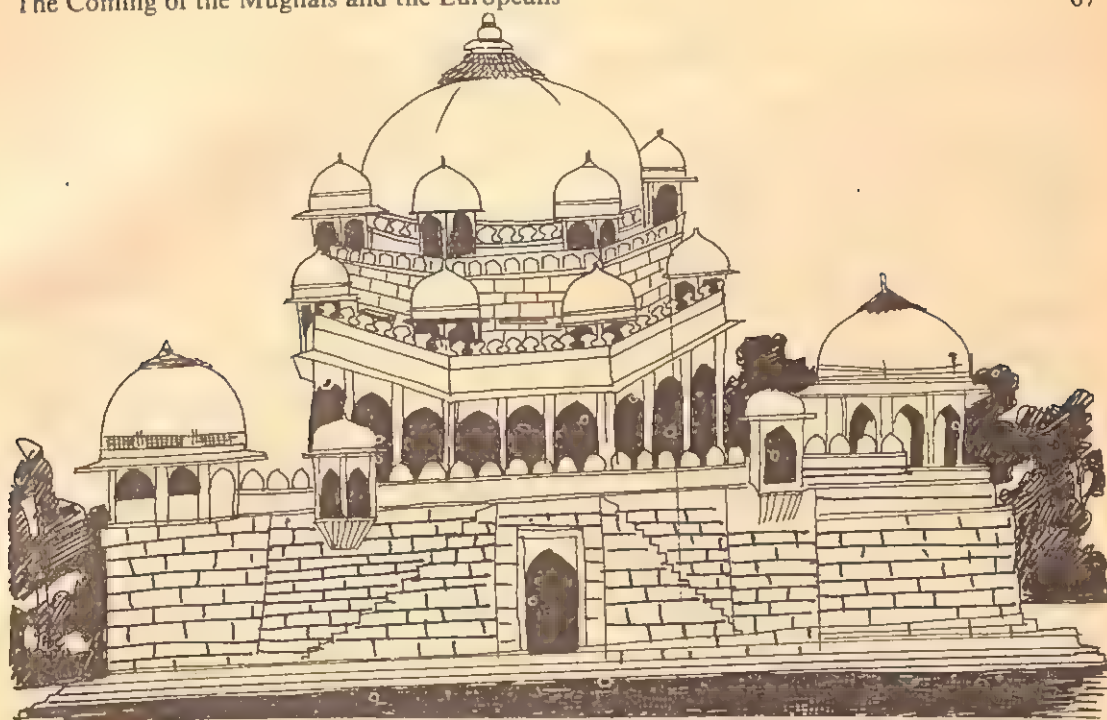
Although Babar had conquered territory in India and founded a dynasty

which came to be called that of the Mughals—he did not live long enough to make it secure against his enemies. His son Humayun was therefore faced with trouble from the very beginning. Since the Mughals were new to India they had difficulty in trying to maintain their position. The newly founded kingdom was attacked by the Afghan nobles who still wanted the Mughals to leave India. Bahadur Shah the ruler of Gujarat also threatened Delhi. Humayun had little time to try and organize the administration and the revenue from the land which his father had conquered. Humayun succeeded in conquering the provinces of Gujarat and Malwa but could not establish his power in western India. In eastern India a strong and ambitious Afghan king was ruling who wished to conquer

Humayun's Tomb, Delhi







Tomb of Sher Shah, Sasaram

Delhi and declare himself the Sultan. This was Sher Shah. Sher Shah not only threatened but attacked the Mughal king. Two battles were fought between him and Humayun and in both Humayun was defeated. His brother who was ruling in the Punjab and Kabul did not help him either. The Mughals retreated from northern India. The kingdom which Babar had acquired was now lost. The unhappy Humayun wandered from place to place in Rajasthan and Sind. It was at Amarkot that a son was born to him, a son who was later to rule in India as the great emperor Akbar. Humayun finally had to leave Sind and go to Persia.

### Sher Shah

Sher Shah's real name was Farid. But he was given the name 'Sher' after he had killed a tiger. He was the son of a nobleman who had a small estate near Jaunpur. Sher Shah's ambition led him to acquire more and more land and build a strong army. Then he proclaimed himself an independent king. After defeating Humayun, Sher Shah declared himself the ruler of India. This was his moment of triumph. But Sher Shah's ambition was not simply to be the ruler of India but to be an efficient ruler. He was influenced by the policies of Ala-ud-din, particularly those relating to military

organization and revenue administration.

On becoming Sultan he first re-organized his army into a strong and efficient military force. He improved the administration by insisting that all the officers must be paid their salaries regularly so that they would not be dissatisfied. If any one had any complaints he could go and see Sher Shah directly and speak to him. This made him popular amongst his subjects. He went out on tour frequently so that he could personally inspect the work of his officers. In connection with the collection of taxes he was careful that the tax demanded from the cultivators should not be too high. In order to fix a just tax he had a new assessment made of all the land in his kingdom. The assessment was done on the basis of measurement as in the reign of Ala-ud-din.

Sher Shah also took pride in the many roads which were built at his orders. These were lined with shady trees and there were wells and rest houses (*sarais*) for the tired travellers. The main highway from northern India to Bengal which had first been built by the Mauryas was now rebuilt. The present-day Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Calcutta closely follows the line of the earlier road. Delhi was connected by road with Burhanpur and Jaunpur. The building of these roads was useful because not only did

travelling become easier for people, but his own officers could go quickly from one place to another. The roads were also used by merchants to transport their goods. Another thing which is associated with Sher Shah was the issuing of the coin called the *rupia*, which is the same name as that used for our modern rupee.

It is possible that Sher Shah might have become a great Sultan. Unfortunately he ruled barely for five years and this was hardly enough time for him to put his ideas fully into practice. He was killed in 1545 during the siege of Kalinjar when a gun burst in his face. The sudden death of Sher Shah was in a sense a blessing for Humayun. Without a strong ruler at Delhi, the kingdoms of the north began to drift apart. Humayun saw this as his opportunity to try and regain the throne at Delhi. Humayun had conquered Qandahar and re-established his control over Kabul with the help of the Safavid King of Persia (Iran). He could now use Kabul as his base for campaigns into India. In 1555, Humayun conquered the Punjab and captured Delhi and Agra, and thereby re-established Mughal power in India. But he enjoyed his success for hardly a year. He was coming down the stairs one day after the evening prayer when he slipped and fell. He died as a result of the fall. He was succeeded by his son Akbar during whose reign India could

once again boast of a proud civilization.

### **The Bahmani Kingdom**

To begin with, the events which were taking place in northern India did not affect the kingdoms of the peninsula. But this situation changed once Mughal power was established. The Mughals were to extend their control into the peninsula as well and unite almost the whole of India.

In the fifteenth century the Bahmani kingdom prospered. This was partly due to the wise rule of the minister Mahmud Gavan. In 1453, a Persian merchant named Mahmud Gavan arrived in the Bahmani kingdom and took service with the king. He soon rose to be the chief minister of the Bahmani kingdom. For twentyfive years Mahmud Gavan helped the Bahmani kings to rule wisely and justly. He reorganized the revenue system so that there would be enough money to maintain a strong army. But he did not do this by taxing the people heavily as many foolish rulers do. Gavan was always careful about how much tax he took from the people. Instead he also thought of other ways of getting revenue. For example, he captured Goa from Vijayanagara so that the profits of trade would now come to the Bahmani kingdom.

Although Mahmud Gavan was popu-

lar with the people he also had his enemies. The court of the Bahmani Sultan was divided into two groups. One was that of the local Muslims who belonged to the Deccan and the other was that of foreigners like Gavan who had come from countries outside India and had taken service with the Bahmani rulers. The two groups were not on friendly terms and were jealous of each other. Finally the local group persuaded the king to have Gavan murdered in 1481.

This was a great loss to the Bahmani kingdom since Gavan was a good minister. Some of the later rulers were weak kings so the kingdom became weak too. The nobles began to fight each other and the king could not control them. Some of the nobles also challenged the power of the Sultan. In addition to this, the attacks from the kingdom of Vijayanagara were increasing. Eventually, the Bahmani kingdom broke up into five new kingdoms. These were Bijapur, Golconda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Berar. Later Berar was conquered by Ahmadnagar and Bidar by Bijapur; so only three kingdoms remained, Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar.

### **The Vijayanagara Kingdom**

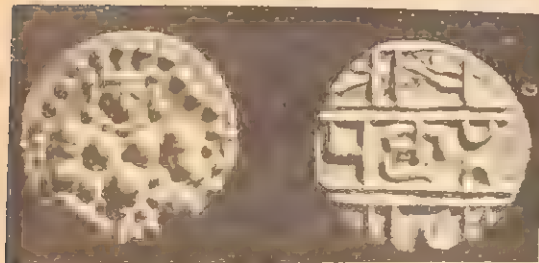
What was happening in Vijayanagara in the meantime? It was having its own internal difficulties with changing



dynasties. These problems weakened Vijayanagara in the fifteenth century. But at the end of the fifteenth century, when the Bahmani kingdom was declining after the death of Mahmud Gavan, the kingdom of Vijayanagara became powerful. The ruler who is associated with this period of Vijayanagara history is Krishnadeva Raya (1509-30).

Krishnadeva Raya not only conquered the Raichur Doab, but he took his armies well into the Bahmani kingdom. This he did to prove that he was stronger than the Bahmanis. He also inflicted a defeat on the kingdom of Orissa. On the west coast his relations were friendly with all the local rulers. These rulers lived off the trade with West Asia and South-East Asia. Krishnadeva Raya realized that if he left these kingdoms in peace then they would trade with Vijayanagara and this trade would bring wealth to Vijayanagara.

Krishnadeva Raya often went on tours of inspection when he travelled throughout his kingdom. He was keen that the officers should work well and that the people should be happy. He wanted to improve agriculture so that there would be more food for the people and more revenue for the kingdom. But this required extensive irrigation. So he ordered the building of



Coin of Krishnadev Raya



Krishnadev Raya with his Queens

large dams where water could be stored and when it was needed it could be taken through channels to the fields. He is also remembered for having spent much money on the building and repair of temples. Krishnadeva Raya had been educated in Sanskrit and Telugu. He composed a long poem in Telugu—the *Amuktamalyada*—in which he explains how a king should rule.

### The Three Kingdoms of the Deccan

Krishnadeva Raya died in 1530 and with his death the power of Vijayanagara began to decline. The three kingdoms of the northern Deccan—Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar—were waiting for a chance to attack Vijayanagara. The chance came in 1565 when they briefly united and defeated Vijayanagara at the battle of Talikota. The glory of Vijayanagara was now at an end. But the three Deccan kingdoms did not enjoy their victory for long either. Events taking place in northern India were to influence the history of the peninsula as well. We have seen that by the later half of the sixteenth century, the Delhi Sultanate had totally declined and a new power had been established—the Mughal dynasty. The Mughals realized that they would have to control the Deccan if they wished to be an all-India power. Therefore it was the extension of Mughal power into the Deccan which was ultimately to

destroy the Deccan kingdoms.

### India and Europe

The Mughals were not the only people who were to influence the course of Indian history. At the end of the fifteenth century there came another people—a completely different people—who arrived on the west coast of India in large ships. These were the Portuguese. The first Portuguese ship to reach the west coast of India was that of Vasco da Gama in 1498. The Portuguese came for trade and since they made large profits in this trade it encouraged more and more of them to come. It was a long journey from Portugal and took many months, because they had to sail around the southern tip of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope. But still they came. Soon they obtained small areas of land where they built their factories. Sometimes they paid for the land and sometimes they took it by force. Portuguese merchants lived near the factories and the ports and these were called 'settlements'. And wherever there were Portuguese settlements there were missionaries—those who came to convert Indians to Christianity. One of the early settlements was Goa, which the Portuguese captured in 1510.

The Portuguese traders were not the first Europeans to visit India. As we

have seen, individual European merchants looking for trade had already travelled through various parts in India. Marco Polo who came from Venice visited the south. Nikitin came from Russia and travelled in the Deccan. But these merchants had come alone. When the Portuguese made their settlements they came in groups and were supported by the Portuguese kingdom. They brought soldiers with them and conquered the areas where they founded their settlements. In the sixteenth century other European countries sent their ships with traders

and tried to establish settlements for trading purposes. Ships came from England, France, Denmark, Holland and Spain. The whole of Europe was interested in having trading relationship not only with India but with many parts of Asia. Trade was the main but not the only motive. They were also curious about discovering the rest of the world and about new cultures and peoples. In order to understand why there was this desire to trade and this curiosity about the world it is necessary to take a longer look at the European scene.

WORLD AS DRAWN BY PTOLEMY  
ABOUT A.D. 150



Claudius Ptolemaeus, an Egyptian mathematician, astronomer and geographer lived in Alexandria in the second century A.D. Besides his most important work, the *Almagest* (syntheses of the geocentric system of universe developed by the Greek astronomers and known as Ptolemaic system), he compiled a treatise on map making and projections accompanied by tables of latitude and longitude for some 8,000 localities. This treatise with maps (though inaccurate so far as the East is concerned and only roughly correct on the north-west European coast) based on the data contained in it was translated into Latin in the early 15th century and greatly influenced the Renaissance geographers.



### The Renaissance in Europe

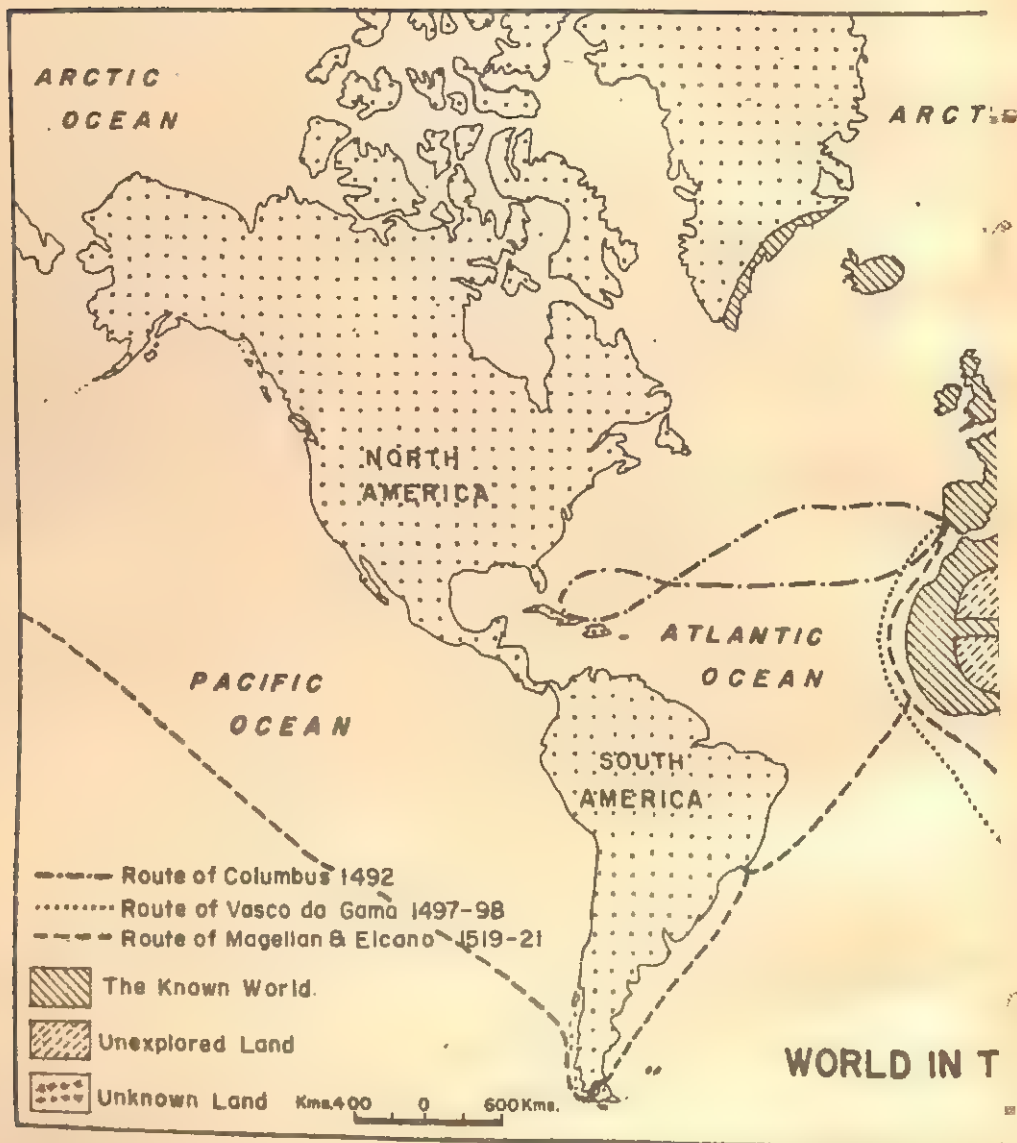
In the fifteenth century there took place in Italy what has since been described as the Renaissance. The word literally means 'rebirth'. After the long period of the Dark Ages, there was a new movement in Europe which led to many of the features which we link with modern thinking and living. The Renaissance began with a revival of interest in the ancient culture of Europe—the pre-Christian culture of the Greeks and the Roman civilization. The history, philosophy, literature and artistic achievements of these civilizations were carefully studied. These studies led to new ways of thinking. Scholars began asking questions about society, laws, philosophy and religion. Previously, people had accepted all the answers to these questions given by the Christian Church, but now they began to look for other answers. There was a spirit of enquiry everywhere. Not only were the princes of the many small kingdoms of Italy taking an interest in learning, but so were the wealthy merchants. The long contact with the Arabs through trade had brought Arab learning to Italy and Spain. This also contributed to the spirit of enquiry.

Gradually the influence of the Church on the scholars (which had been quite strong in the Middle Ages), began to decrease. People were no longer willing to accept everything which the Church told them about the

universe, about God and about human life. Thinking was based more and more on what a man could see and feel and observe, rather than on what he was made to believe he should think. In this process modern science was born. The scholars of the time observed what went on around them, and sometimes experimented with things. They used their powers of reasoning to discover the laws of science and to improve their knowledge. They did not believe that knowledge came from God. They maintained that man must discover knowledge by intelligently observing the world around him. Attention was also drawn to the techniques and instruments used and attempts were made to improve technology.

All this meant seeing man as the centre of the world and as something special. Renaissance thinkers insisted that knowledge must be used for the benefit of man. The importance of each individual human being was emphasized, but at the same time the fellowship of all human beings was also stressed. Man must be good to man not because God has said so, but because they are both human beings.

The thinking of the Renaissance can be seen for example in the way in which knowledge in astronomy was advanced at this time. In the fifteenth century a Polish philosopher Copernicus put forward a new and revolutionary theory. He tried to prove that





The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.



the sun is the centre of the universe and that the earth and the other planets move around it. This was thought to be revolutionary because the Christian Church had always taught that the earth (since it was created by God) was the centre of the universe. Copernicus tried to prove his theory on the basis of mathematical calculations, in the same way as Aryabhatta had done many centuries before in India. In the early seventeenth century, Galileo, an Italian astronomer and scientist, proved the same thing. But he did not base his work on theoretical calculations alone. He used the process of observation and experiment. He observed the sun and the planets through a telescope (which had just been invented) and then arrived at his result. Galileo's work was very important. He was using a scientific method to prove his theory. He was also challenging the authority of the Church by declaring its knowledge to be wrong. He got into trouble with the Church. The Church forced him to state that his theory was wrong (although it was correct). But the knowledge which he had obtained through his observations and experiments spread to other parts of Europe and led in turn to other scientific discoveries.

All this did not happen in a hurry. It took at least two centuries for the movement to spread and to influence thinking in various parts of Europe. It

began in the towns of Italy and slowly spread to the other towns of Europe especially those in France, Holland, Belgium and England. The merchants in the towns did not want the Church to be too powerful. Nor did they get on well with the feudal lords who were always trying to tax them. So the Renaissance thinking was popular with the merchants as it challenged the authority of the Church and of the feudal lords.

The person who is often regarded as a symbol of the Renaissance is Leonardo da Vinci. His thinking reflects the influence of this new movement or 'rebirth'. Leonardo lived in Italy (1452-1519) and was by profession a painter. He was an extremely gifted painter and his paintings show a careful study of form and colour. But he was both an artist and a scientist. For example, when he painted men in action, he first studied the muscles in the body and the effect of muscles on movement. His interest in science led him to inventing all kinds of machines. Perhaps the most exciting of his experiments were his attempts to invent a flying machine. People all over the world have looked at the birds and have wished also to fly. Many poets have imagined what it would be like to fly. Some have even described aerial chariots. But these are all imaginary. Leonardo was not content merely to imagine a man flying. He used the

existing knowledge of technology and machines and tried to produce a machine which would enable a man to fly. His descriptions and drawings of this machine show what a good scientific mind he had.

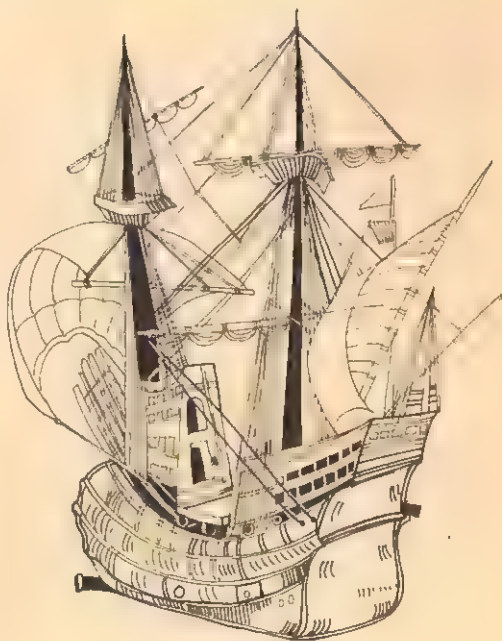
### The Age of Discovery

The ideas of the Renaissance spread from town to town and many of them were carried by traders travelling from one part of Europe to another. The merchants in the towns were interested in these new ideas and soon a time was to come when they were to combine with the scientists to help each other. In 1453 the Ottoman Turks attacked and captured the city of Constantinople. The Turks were already in control of a large part of western Asia. This was a blow to Europe because much of the trade with Asia came through this region. Europe was now cut off from Asian trade. Therefore it was necessary for the European merchants to find a new route to India and Asia.

Europe had to continue its trade with Asia because of two reasons. One was that Europe needed spices from Asia. The spices were used for preserving meat. During the bitter cold winters of northern Europe this was the only way in which people could continue to eat meat. The trade in Asian spices was in the hands of the Arabs. They brought the spices to the

markets of western Asia and sold them at a profit to Italian merchants. The Italians in turn sold the spices at a very large profit to other parts of Europe. Another reason was that a number of cities in Europe were dependent on the Asian trade and if this trade had stopped the cities would have declined. So the wealthy merchants in these cities were quite willing to pay for the discovery of new means of keeping the trade going.

If you look at the map of Europe and Asia you will see that the most convenient land-route from Europe to Asia goes through western Asia. Since



A Model of Sixteenth Century Ship

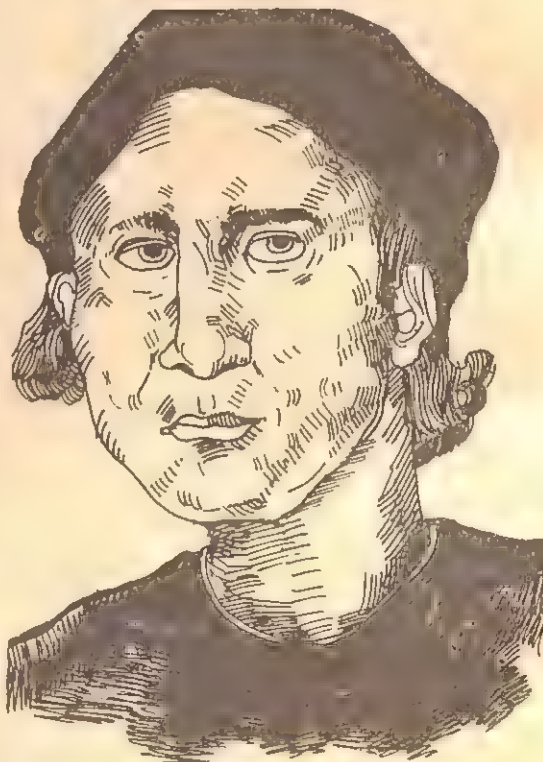
this route was now closed to Europeans, they had to think of using an alternative route which was the sea-route. But in those days very little was known about Africa (except for the northern half) and nothing was known about the existence of the two Americas—north and south. The Renaissance scientists were interested in helping the merchants find a new sea-route to India. This led to what has been called the 'Age of Discovery', with ships sailing in various directions from the ports of Europe searching for routes to India.

The Portuguese were the first in the field. In 1488 Bartholomew Diaz sailed down the west coast of Africa and came as far as the southern tip of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope. Ten years later, Vasco da Gama followed the route of Diaz but continued along the east coast of Africa and across the Arabian Sea. He arrived in India in 1498. Having discovered the sea route to India with the help of an Arab navigator, the Portuguese then attacked Arab trading settlements and captured the trade from the Arabs. They began to supply Europe with spices from Asia and made large profits on this trade.

The Spanish were not left far behind. The king of Spain paid for an expedi-



Vasco da Gama



Colombus





Amerigo Vespucci

tion led by the famous Christopher Columbus. He thought that if he sailed to west from Spain he would arrive in Asia, not knowing about the American continent. So he sailed to west and reached the islands of the West Indies, which he thought were a part of India. (Therefore he called them the 'West Indies'.) This was in 1492. In 1497 Amerigo Vespucci sailed to America. But by now the geographers of the time also realized that this was the continent of America (it was named after Amerigo Vespucci) and not Asia. Finally the existence of the American continents was proved in 1519, when Magellan sailed round the world. The Spanish did not discover

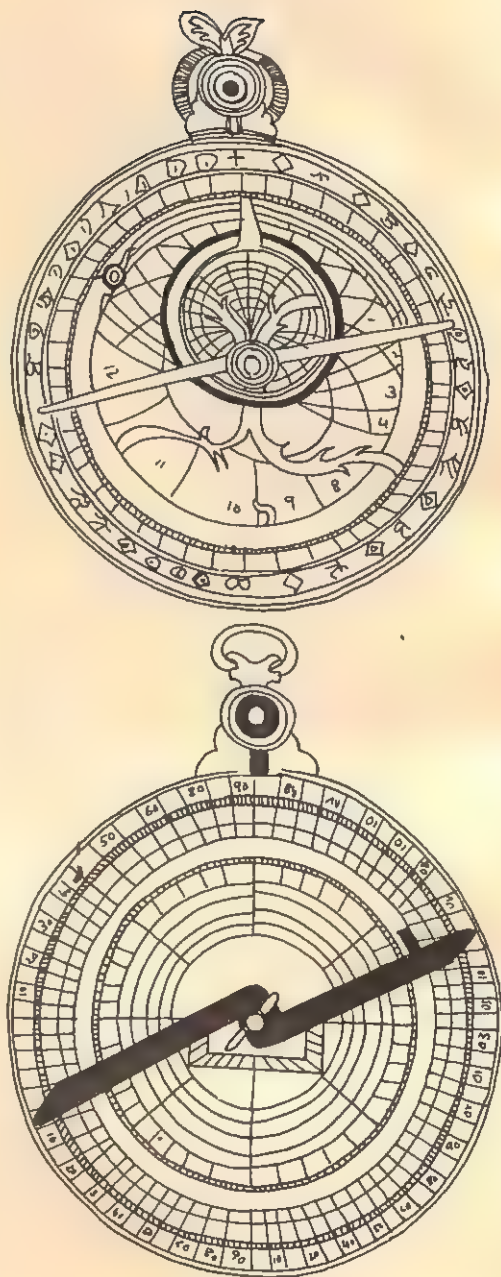
the sea-route to India and therefore could not profit by the Asian trade. But they discovered in America the two great and rich civilizations of the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru. Here they found vast quantities of gold, silver and precious stones. So they conquered these lands, destroyed these civilizations and brought the gold and silver back to Spain. Spain became very rich.

How did the scientists help the merchants in discovering new lands and trade? The discovery of various parts of the world so quickly was made



Magellan

possible because of combination of geographical knowledge and scientific methods. First of all the maps were improved. To begin with, European sailors had used the maps which had come down from Greek and Roman times. But now, every time a ship went to a new part of the world, the information it collected was given to the geographers who improved their maps. Secondly, a number of new instruments and techniques were used and experimented with, which resulted in an improvement in knowledge of navigation. The Europeans took two instruments from the Arabs which through constant checking and cross-checking they made more accurate. These were the astrolabe and the quadrant by which the latitude of a given point can be measured. A ship sailing in the middle of an ocean, far away from land, would not lose its bearings because it could work out its position. Before the use of these instruments, sailors had had to rely on the position of the stars to find their direction. With the invention of the mariner's compass, the danger of being lost on the ocean was reduced still further. Ships could now sail across the ocean and not be forced to stay close to the coastline. This meant that they moved much faster from place to place. For the merchants, it meant less expense on transportation. The Portuguese experimented with different kinds of



A Picture of Astrolabe

sails and finally invented moveable sails which could be adjusted according to the direction of the wind. This meant that the winds blowing across the ocean could be used in any direction and could also be used to increase the speed of the ship. It was the Portuguese again who fitted good quality guns on their ships and thus improved their fighting capacity. This was part of the reason why they could fight successful battle against the local people on the coasts. They would bombard the port and then escape back into the sea. When they had weakened the forces on the coast they would land their soldiers and fight. The scholars and scientists were successful in their experiments and inventions because they did not merely use knowledge from books but they studied the actual machines and instruments and they worked together with the artisans who made and used these machines and instruments.

Portugal and Spain began the hunt for new routes to Asia, trade with other parts of the world and conquest overseas. But other countries in Europe also joined in, such as Holland, Belgium, France, England and Denmark. But these countries came in later and their importance increased when that of Portugal and Spain declined in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

## The Reformation and Counter-Reformation

The decline of Portugal and Spain and the rise of other European countries in this age of exploration and trade was partly due to changes in the religious background of Europe. Throughout the period of the Dark Ages right up until the Renaissance, the dominant religion in Europe had been Christianity. Until this time Christianity had been divided into two main groups—the Roman Catholics and the Greek Orthodox. The Greek Orthodox had their centre at Constantinople and claimed that their version was the older and more orthodox version of Christianity. The Roman Catholics had their centre at Rome. This version of Christianity was later in date and was the accepted form all over northern and western Europe. The head of the Church was called the Pope (meaning 'father') and throughout the medieval period the office of the Pope was powerful in both religious and political matters. No one could challenge the authority of the Pope. This was the situation when the new ideas of the Renaissance began to influence people's thinking.

The thinkers of the Renaissance stressed many ideas which the Catholic Church at that time did not approve of. For example, they held that knowledge does not consist only of what is



written in books or what the religious leaders of the community may think; it can also come from the observations and thinking of ordinary human beings. They also said that man's concern should not be only for God, but also for his fellow-human beings. Added to this came all the new discoveries and new knowledge which gave the Renaissance thinkers a confidence in their own ways of thinking and acting. Gradually the authority of the Church and the Pope began to be challenged. People began to object to the Church interfering in secular matters, in matters which had nothing to do with religion, such as politics. The Church had been allowed to collect variety of taxes from the people and this was resented. The Church collected money and had been granted land and therefore the members of the Church lived in great luxury. This was also against the principles of Christ's teaching. The feeling against the Roman Catholic Church grew stronger and stronger and finally a number of Christians broke away from the Catholic Church. Some Christian theologians such as Martin Luther, Erasmus and John Calvin denounced the Church. This break with the Catholic Church in the early sixteenth century led to the forming of a new group of Christians—the Protestants, that is, those who were protesting against the Catholic Church. This fresh division of Christianity led to considerable bloodshed

because many long wars were fought between the Catholics and the Protestants.

But the merchants of the North European cities approved of the Protestant movement and gave it their support. Because the Protestants challenged the authority of the Church and encouraged a spirit of enquiry and because they stressed the importance of the individual human being, they were not opposed to the new ideas of the Renaissance. Some of the northern European countries such as England, Holland and the Scandinavian countries broke away from the Catholic Church and accepted Protestantism as their religion. France was divided between the two. It was in these countries that the merchants continued to use the knowledge of the scientists and the new thinking progressed.

The Reformation having taken place in northern Europe, there was a Counter-Reformation (that is a movement against the Reformation) in the Catholic countries of southern Europe. The Catholics of Spain were leading this movement. Attempts were made to reform Catholicism. For example, the Society of Jesus or Jesuits as they are called was founded. Among the more famous of these was Francis Xavier who spent many years working in India and eventually died here. But the Catholic Church refused to accept the Reformation. Instead it became more orthodox. Anyone who was at

all critical of the Church was put on trial and punished. Often such people were burnt to death. These trials came to be known as the 'Inquisition'. New thinking was not permitted. This led to an intellectual decline.

In contrast to this in the northern countries the picture was different. The property of the Catholic Church was often taken away and the revenue came to the royal treasury. The merchants were encouraged in trading activities because this brought in more money. Where need be they were given the support of the government. Thus as we shall see later, the contact between Europe and Asia began through trade but gradually even the governments became involved. Finally the European nations had colonies in Asia and Africa.

### **The Portuguese in India**

The Portuguese came to India to trade. Their first concern was to attack the Arab traders and take away the spice trade from them. This they succeeded in doing even by resorting to piracy. In order to maintain the spice trade they had to have settlements in western Asia, India and later in South-East Asia as well. Having come to Asia they began to trade apart from spices in various other goods as well, such as textiles. The Portuguese never wanted to make India their home.

They lived for temporary periods in the settlements and then returned to Portugal. Their interest in India was therefore largely that of its being a place where large profits in trade could be made.

They had one other interest. They wanted to convert as many Indians as possible to the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. They were intolerant of the existing religions of India and did not hesitate to force people to become Christian. They even introduced the 'Inquisition' in India. Christianity was not new to India. The first Christians here were the Syrian Christians who had accepted Christianity long before even the Portuguese had been converted to Christianity in Europe. The Syrian Christians had lived peacefully in India for many centuries. But the Portuguese were not satisfied with this and did all that they could to make more converts.

### **The Mughals in India**

In contrast to this the coming of the Mughals to India had totally different results. The Mughals did not come to trade. They came to acquire a kingdom and this they succeeded in doing. A bigger difference was that the Mughals made India their home. They settled here and became a part of the Indian population. They were concerned with

the welfare of India. Nor were the Mughals interested in converting large numbers of Indians to their religion. There were already many Muslims in India and the Mughals with the exception of Aurangzeb were tolerant of

all religions. Mughal rule was to result in the creation of a strong and powerful empire including almost the whole of India. India experienced another period of civilization, whose symbol was the Emperor Akbar.

### Exercises

#### I. Match the contents of column A with those of column B.

A	B
1. After defeating Humayun Sher Shah	1. the kingdom of Vijayanagara became powerful.
2. Mahmud Gawan helped the Bahmani kings to	2. Venice and visited south India.
3. At the end of the fifteenth century, when the Bahmani kingdom was declining	3. declared himself the ruler of India.
4. Marco Polo came from	4. Russia and travelled in the Deccan.
5. Nikitin came from	5. rule wisely and justly for twenty-five-years.

- II. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.
- In 1526 a battle was fought on the famous plain of \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ defeated the Lodi army. (Talikota, Tarain, Panipat, Humayun, Babar, Rana Sanga)
  - It was possible that Sher Shah might have become as great a Sultan as \_\_\_\_\_ if he had had the time. (Babar, Humayun, Muhammad Ghori, Ala-ud-din, Muhammad-bin-Tughluq)
  - In 1453, a Persian merchant named \_\_\_\_\_ arrived in the \_\_\_\_\_ kingdom and took service with the king. (Ibn Battutah, Mahmud Gawan, Thomas Roe, Bahmani, Vijayanagara, Bijapur)
  - Krishnadeva Raya died in \_\_\_\_\_ and with his death the power of the \_\_\_\_\_ kingdom began to decline. (1453, 1530, 1543, Bahmani, Vijayanagara, Berar)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ had conquered territory in India and founded a kingdom in the name of his ancestors the \_\_\_\_\_. (Humayun, Sher Shah, Babar, Mamluk, Abbasids, Mughals).
  - \_\_\_\_\_ discovered that the earth moves round the sun, but he was forced by \_\_\_\_\_ to say that this was wrong. (Copernicus, Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo, the Muslims, the Protestants, the Catholic Church)



7. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first European of this period to reach America, but the continent was named after \_\_\_\_\_. (Bartholomew Diaz, Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, Vespucci, Magellan)

III. Which of the statements given below are correct? Answer 'yes' or 'no' after each statement.

1. Sher Shah was killed in 1545 during the seige at Kalinjar.
2. In 1453, a Persian merchant named Mahmud Gawan left the Bahmani kingdom and took service with the king of Vijayanagara.
3. Ahmadnagar was conquered by Berar and Bijapur by Bidar.
4. Krishnadeva Raya not only conquered the Raichur Doab, but he took his armies well into the Bahmani kingdom.
5. The first Portuguese ship to reach the west coast of India was that of Vasco da Gama in 1498.

IV. Answer the following questions:

1. Why did the nobles invite Babar to fight the Lodis in India?
2. Who was Sher Shah? Why was he successful? Why is it said that he might have become a great Sultan?
3. Why did the Bahmani kingdom break up and what was its result?
4. Who was Krishnadeva Raya and why is he remembered?
5. Who were the first Europeans to come to India and why did they come?
6. What is meant by the term 'Renaissance'? What influence did it have on Europe?
7. What is the difference between the theories of Copernicus and of Galileo?
8. Why is Leonardo da Vinci regarded as a symbol of the Renaissance?
9. What were the discoveries which helped the Europeans to find a new route to India?
10. Why was the Christian Church divided into the Roman Catholics and the Protestants in the sixteenth century?

V. Interesting things to do

1. Trace in your atlas the route through which the European and the Arab traders came to India.
2. Make a list of the European nations who discovered new areas of the world and locate in your atlas the places to which they had travelled.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# AKBAR

Akbar was only thirteen in 1556 when his father died and he was proclaimed the king. This was a big responsibility for a young boy. Akbar was far more interested in pigeon-flying and in going out hunting with cheetahs. He did not like studying, but he had an excellent memory and he enjoyed having books read to him. Because he was so young, his guardian Bairam Khan became the regent, that is, he looked after the matters of government, administration and war until Akbar was old enough to do so himself.

Humayun did not have time to strengthen Mughal power in northern India. This job was left to Akbar. The first conflict came with Hemu. He was a general of one of the Afghan princes and had made himself strong in the kingdom of Sher Shah. So another battle was fought at Panipat between Bairam Khan and Hemu. Hemu was defeated and Akbar reoccupied Delhi and Agra which the Mughals had lost.

Now once again Mughal power was being re-established in northern India. When Akbar came of age, he decided to end the regency of Bairam Khan and took over the government. Having established himself at Delhi and Agra, he decided to extend Mughal power to other parts of the country. He proceeded to conquer various important towns and forts such as Gwalior, Ajmer and Jaunpur. He also annexed the kingdom of Malwa. This brought him into the neighbourhood of the Rajput kingdoms.

Akbar was keen to have friendly relations with the Rajputs. One of the ways in which he did this was to enter into marriage alliance between his family and various Rajput royal families. He himself married a number of Rajput princesses. His policy of friendship and alliance with the Rajputs made his own position stronger. He also gave them high offices in his administration. Some of his most

important and loyal officers and advisers were Rajputs, such as Raja Man Singh. But he also had to fight against those Rajputs princes who opposed him, such as Rana Pratap. The two powerful forts of Rajasthan—Ranthambor and Chittor—were captured by the Mughals.

Akbar thought of India as one and wished to control the whole country. So he sent his armies in various directions to conquer and to annex. He conquered Gujarat. This was important because the revenue from the overseas trade of Gujarat now came to the Mughal empire. Since the merchants of Gujarat traded with both the Arabs and the Europeans, the income which came into Gujarat was large. Later, Bengal was also annexed. This area was again valuable because of the revenue from the rich and fertile land and from overseas trade. Bengal was visited by traders from South-East Asia

and China. The merchants of Bengal exchanged textiles for spices.

By 1595, Akbar's armies had conquered Kashmir, Sind, Orissa, central India, and Qandahar (in Afghanistan). The northern part of India was under Mughal control. There was close contact now between India and the regions to the north and west of it—Central Asia and Persia. By maintaining a friendly relationship with these areas Akbar safeguarded his northern frontier. At the same time it led to an increase in trade between India and Central Asia and Persia. In India only Assam and the peninsula remained independent. Akbar was not very keen on trying to conquer the Deccan but he realized that only if he controlled the Deccan could he control the peninsula as well. So a campaign was begun against the kingdom of Ahmadnagar. It lasted for eight years as the Deccan kingdoms did their best to try and resist the power of the Mughals. Finally the Mughals annexed Khandesh, Berar and parts of the kingdom of Ahmadnagar. The Mughal empire now extended as far as the Godavari river in the Deccan. Akbar was the emperor of the larger part of India.

### Administration

Mughal administration was a mixture of the existing Indian system and



Coin of Akbar



some ideas which the Mughals borrowed from Central Asia and Persia. Very little change was made in the administration of the villages and the towns. The earlier system continued and most of the local officers were Hindus. Sometimes in the far away villages people were hardly aware that a new dynasty was ruling at Delhi. But gradually the influence of Mughal rule was felt.

One of the most important features of Mughal administration was the *mansabdari* system. Every noble, officer or civil servant was given a rank or a *mansab* and he was known as a *mansabdar*. The rank was valued in terms of a certain number of mounted soldiers. The ranks normally given to officers and nobles were valued from 10 to 5,000. The rank was held only by the officer during his lifetime. His son could not inherit the rank if he wished to join the emperor's service. He would have to be appointed to his own rank. Thus the emperor maintained strict control over his officers. The troops maintained by the *mansabdar* could be used by the emperor whenever he wished. But Akbar had a select body directly under his control and a strong artillery arm so there was little danger of the *mansabdars* using their troops against the emperor.

The emperor ruled with the help of various officers. The most important of these were the *wazir* and the *bakshi*. The *wazir* looked after the revenue

administration and the *bakshi* looked after military organization. Thus they were both very important but neither of them had total control over the administration. The most powerful person was still the emperor. There was the chief steward (*khan-i-saman*) who attended to the royal household. The chief *qazi* held the highest position amongst the judges. Another officer kept a record of all the charitable grants and donations made by the emperor and his family.

The *wazir* and the *bakshi* had a number of officers working under them and the central government knew what was going on in the empire. The emperor also took advice from others. Generally he would call them to the Diwan-i-Khas (hall of private audience) or his private apartments and consult them. He was available to his subjects in the large audience hall called the Diwan-i-am (hall of public audience) or else he would appear at the balcony of his palace known as *jharokha*, near which people would gather to see him.

The Mughal empire was divided into a number of *subas* or provinces. The pattern of administration at the capital was repeated in each *suba*. During the reign of Akbar there were fifteen *subas*. Every *suba* was divided into a number of *sarkars* and each of these into a number of *parganas*. A group of villages made one *paragana*. The governor of the province, the *subadar*, was

the most important person in the province. He looked after the administration with the help of other officers. The *diwan* kept the records of the revenue from the land. The *bakshi* sent regular news reports to the capital and attended to the needs of the army in the *suba*. There was another officer whose name is still familiar in the towns and villages of northern India. This was the *kotwal* who was the officer in charge of town administration. Police stations are still sometimes called the *kotwali*. The *kotwal* was responsible for catching criminals. He also inspected the weights and measures used by the merchants, so that no one could be cheated by them. Another job which the *kotwal* did was to keep a register of all the persons living in the neighbourhood including visiting foreigners, and this made him into a kind of census officer.

Akbar realized that sometimes an officer who stays for a long time in one job or in one place, becomes very powerful and begins to harass the people under him. So he insisted that officers should be transferred if they had been too long in one place. In the past, the *wazirs* and ministers were powerful and could do many things as they wished. Now the emperor was more powerful.

### The Income of the State

The Mughal government collected

revenue from two sources—the land and trade. Most of the revenue was spent in paying the salary of the officers. The higher officials received very large salaries which enabled them to live in great luxury.

Although Akbar wanted that salaries be paid in cash, in fact most of them had to be paid by grants of land revenue called *jagirs*. The officers collected from the *jagir* the revenue which was the equivalent of his salary. Because these officers were paid their salary in grants of revenue, it was necessary to find out how much revenue each village ought to provide. This would make it simpler for the emperor to make the grant. Since the produce of the land varies from region to region and changes over periods of time, it is always useful for a government to make an assessment from time to time. Akbar wanted detailed information on the produce and revenue of his empire. This had to be done in order also to check the amount of revenue which was being sent to the government. The state took one-third of the produce and preferred if the revenue was paid in money. Raja Todar Mal was asked to make an estimate of the land revenue. When this had been done, a careful record was kept. Akbar insisted on this record being always up-to-date. This assessment was also helpful to the peasants. Now they would know how much of their produce they could keep and how much

they had to give to the state.

The revenue from trade was not so large as the revenue from the land. But in areas where trade prospered, such as Gujarat and Bengal, it helped to make the *suba* richer. Trading caravans of camels and bullock wagons carried goods within India. Some of the traders crossed the frontiers and took their goods into Central Asia, Persia, or even Russia. Trade overseas increased in Mughal times. The Indian coastline boasted of many ports. Indian traders exported textiles, indigo, saltpetre and spices.

It was in connection with this overseas trade that a number of Europeans visited the court of Akbar. The Portuguese had already established their trading settlements and were trading with merchants on the west coast of India. English merchants at this time were very envious of the profits which the Portuguese made. So they sent people to Akbar's court to get permission to trade in the same places where the Portuguese were trading. But Akbar was not too keen to give permission to so many European traders.

### Literature and the Fine Arts

Akbar never learnt to read or write, but he was familiar with the best books and he spent many hours in educating himself. This he did by having the books read to him and by discussing

ideas with a variety of philosophers, scholars and writers. He was also very fond of poetry and could quote from many poems. He was not, however, very interested in the natural sciences. This was unfortunate because if he had shown an interest in the Renaissance or the new technology of the Portuguese, the progress of science in India would have been more rapid.

Among his close friends with whom he had long discussions were two brothers—Abul Fazl and Faizi. Abul Fazl wrote a book, *Akbarnama* (the life of Akbar) of which a section is the famous *Ain-i-Akbari*. This section deals with the laws and the revenue system of the empire, and also describes the condition of the country. Faizi was a poet and wrote in Persian. The official language of the Mughal empire was Persian, therefore most of the educated people especially those who were working in the government knew Persian. Akbar and his friends encouraged the translation into Persian of important works in Sanskrit. The entire text of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* was translated at this time and Abul Fazl wrote the preface to the Persian text. There were many scholars who wrote biographies of the various Sultans and kings in Sanskrit and received large donations from these rulers.

It was also at this time that many poets began writing in Hindi. Among



them were Vallabhacharya, Keshavadasa and Rahim. Rahim's *dohas* (couplets) are still recited. Even more important was the work of Tulsidas who wrote the story of the *Ramayana* and called it the *Ramacharitamanas*. Tulsidasa's poem was popular amongst the people who spoke Hindi.

Apart from Abul Fazl and Faizi, another person who was close to the emperor and was frequently seen at Akbar's court was Tansen, the famous singer. Tansen enriched the *Hindustani* school of music by making additions in the style of singing many of the *ragas*. One of the most popular of these was the *raga Darbari* which some people say, Tansen composed especially for Akbar. The *Hindustani* school of music had by now taken many features from Persian music.

There were also a number of painters at the emperor's court, who painted beautiful miniature paintings to illustrate the books in his library. They painted in a mixture of Indian and Persian styles. The colours which they used were typically Indian and the delicacy of their painting was typically Persian. Many of the painters were Hindus of the lower castes, but this did not worry the emperor. Some of them signed their paintings and we know their names. But often a painting was done by a group of painters. They came from various parts of India, from Gujarat, Kashmir, the Deccan, etc. and the local styles from these

areas also influence their painting. When they were not painting illustrations for a book, they would paint scenes depicting legends and stories from India and Persia, such as the legends of the young Krishna as a cowherd or the story of the love of Laila and Majnu. But most of the paintings at Akbar's court were scenes from his life and of the Mughal court.

Books were no longer written on palm-leaves or birch-bark. They were now written on paper. The Chinese had invented paper and started exporting it to western Asia. In the thirteenth century Indian traders were importing paper and later it came to be made here as well. The books were all written by hand at this time in India, although in China and in Europe they had invented the printing press and were using it. Writing books by hand takes a long time, so the number of books produced were not so many as the number produced by printing. The Persian books were written in a variety of beautiful Persian scripts, such as the *nastaliq*. The *devanagari* script was being fairly commonly used for books in Sanskrit and Hindi.

### Architecture

Akbar's court was in residence at Delhi and at Agra. But Akbar decided to build a new city which would be his capital. This was the city of Fatehpur Sikri near Agra. He chose Fatehpur

because this was where the *sufi* saint Salim Chisti lived, and Akbar had great respect for him. At Fatehpur, Akbar built his magnificent palaces and pavilions in red sandstone. The architecture at Fatehpur Sikri is an excellent blending of Persian, Central Asian and various Indian styles. The same is true of the tomb which Akbar had built for his father Humayun at Delhi. It is different from the earlier tombs of the Sultanate period, not only because of its architectural style, which has more Indian features than the earlier tombs, but also because it is placed in the middle of a large, well-laid out garden. The entrance to the whole area is through a massive gateway, which is a monument in itself. The garden and the gateway are to be found in all Mughal-style tombs.

Mughal architecture at this time took many features from earlier Indian styles, such as square brackets at the entrances, the design of the caves, etc. At the same time, the Mughal style influenced the palace and temple architecture of Hindu rulers. The palaces of many of the Rajput princes show this influence clearly. Even the Govind Dev Temple at Vrindaban is easily recognizable by the fact that it is made of red sandstone and has this mixed style.

### Akbar's Religious Policy

One of the buildings at Fatehpur Sikri was known as the Ibadat Khana.

Palace of Birbal's Daughter, Fatehpur Sikri



Buland Darwaza, Fatehpur Sikri

This was the place where the Emperor Akbar held discussions on various religions. Akbar was very interested in the problems of religion. He felt that every religion pointed towards God. And therefore he wondered why it was not possible for people following different religions to live peacefully with one another. He also wanted to find a way which would be common to all religions and would unite all people. So he invited the teachers of various religions to come and discuss their religion with him.

First the Muslim teachers of religion came to the *Ibadat Khana*. Later others were invited to hold discussions with the king—Hindus, Parsis, Jainas and Christians. The Portuguese governor sent missionaries, in the hope that they might be able to convert the emperor to Christianity, but they did not succeed. The emperor invited them because he was interested in the teachings of Christ, but he had no intention of becoming a Christian. Some of the Muslim teachers of religion were of course upset by Akbar showing so much respect towards other religions.

After all these discussions Akbar decided that he had found the way. He did not create his own religion. He suggested a new religious path. This was based on the common truths of all religions and a few rules taken from various religions. This religious path was later referred to as the *Din-i-Ilahi*

or divine monotheism—the religion of the one God.

First of all, Akbar declared that he was the spiritual guide of his people. Then he described the rules of this new religious path. He favoured peace and tolerance. He discouraged the killing of animals and suggested that people should stop eating meat, at least for a few days every year. He disapproved of cruel punishments and the mutilation of those who had committed crimes, because he felt that it was better to make a criminal realize his fault rather than just to mutilate him. He strongly disapproved of women becoming *satis* on the death of their husbands. He also introduced the veneration of the sun, fire and light in his ritual. Those who accepted him as their spiritual guide took a vow that they would be prepared to sacrifice their property, their honour, their religion and their life for the emperor.

Not all the people at the court accepted Akbar's spiritual guidance. Some of the nobles such as Raja Birbal who was a favourite of the emperor became sincere followers. Others did so only to please the emperor. There were still others, such as Raja Man Singh, who disapproved of all this and said so quite openly. Akbar respected their feelings and did not insist that they follow his religious teachings. Some of the Muslim nobles became very worried because they thought that Akbar



was trying to destroy Islam. But Akbar in proclaiming his new religious teaching was not trying to destroy any religion. He was sincerely anxious to achieve unity in the country. The 'Din-i-Ilahi' was his attempt at bringing the people of India together.

Akbar was a great ruler not because he ruled a vast empire, but because of his concern for the country and the people. He believed that a ruler is the guardian of his people. He must look after the welfare of his subjects. In many ways Akbar had the same ideas about ruling as did Ashoka. Ashoka says in one of his edicts "All men are my children". If Akbar had known about this he would have agreed with it. Akbar's great dream was that India should be united as one country. People should forget their differences of region and religion and think of

themselves only as the people of India. During his own reign he succeeded to some extent in this. It is unfortunate that his descendants did not always continue this policy. Akbar also believed that if people followed his new teaching then there would be unity and peace. This was a weak point in his thinking. Unity and peace can only come if everyone believes in it and works for it. It cannot come by following one man, even if he is the ruler.

Akbar had one great quality. He was fearless. He showed boldness and courage in physical feats when he rode and tamed angry elephants or swam across rivers in full flood. He also showed courage when he opposed those who used their power and orthodoxy in trying to keep back new ideas and preventing changes from taking place in Indian society and Indian

Tomb of Akbar, Sikandra



thinking. It was a fearlessness which was rooted in honesty and this is a rare quality.

When Akbar died in 1605 he was

buried in a tomb which he had started building for himself at Sikandra near Agra. His tomb represents the personality of the emperor. It is simple and yet imposing.

### Exercises

#### I. Words and terms you should know:

1. *mansabdar* — *Mansab* means rank or office. A *mansabdar* was the bearer of a rank whose salary was fixed in accordance with the grade indicated by the number of troopers under his command. He had to perform civil or military duties in accordance with the orders of the emperor. The rank was not hereditary, and the salary was often paid by means of assignments of land revenue.
2. *bakshi* — Officer in charge of military organization.
3. *kotwal* — Officer in charge of town administration.
4. *Din-i-Ilahi* — A religious path laid down by Akbar. *Din-i-Ilahi* means divine monotheism or the religion of one God.

#### II. Match the contents of column A with those of column B.

A	B
1. Bengal was visited by traders from	1. western Asia.
2. The Mughal empire was divided into a number of	2. The Ibadat Khana.
3. The Chinese had invented paper and started exporting it to	3. India should be united as one country.
4. One of the buildings at Fatehpur Sikri is called	4. South-East Asia and China.
5. Akbar's great dream was that	5. <i>subas</i> or provinces.

#### III. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ was keen to have a friendly relation with the \_\_\_\_\_ (Humayun, Babar, Akbar, Mughals, Afghans, Rajputs)
2. The two important forts of Ranthambhor and Chittor were captured by the \_\_\_\_\_ (Lodis, Afghans, Mughals)

3. The———empire during the reign of Akbar extended as far as the———river in the ———.(Afghan, Bahmani, Mughal, Yamuna, Narmada, Godavari, Deccan, south)
4. At Fatehpur———built his magnificent palaces and pavilions in———sandstone.(Babar, Jahangir, Akbar, black, red, white)
5. In many ways———had the same ideas about ruling as did———. (Humayun, Sher Shah, Akbar, Chandragupta, Ashoka)

IV. Which of the statements given below are correct? Answer 'yes' or 'no' after each statement.

1. Humayun did not have time to strengthen Mughal power in northern India.
2. Akbar thought of India as one and worked to control the whole country.
3. The chief *qazi* held the lowest position among the judges.
4. Akbar never wanted detailed information on the land revenue of his empire.
5. Akbar was very interested in religion.

V. Answer the following questions:

1. How did Akbar consolidate the Mughal kingdom?
2. What important changes did Akbar introduce in his administration?
3. What were the main sources of revenue of the Mughal government? How did Akbar improve the collection of revenue?
4. What are the characteristics of the architecture of this period?
5. What made Akbar think of a new religion and what was the result?

VI. Interesting things to do:

1. Find a book on Mughal miniature paintings and describe the scene depicted in the painting which you like most.
2. Make a list of the *subas* in the Mughal empire during the reign of Akbar. Find out how many of the names of these *subas* are still used in various parts of India.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

# The Age of Magnificence

Akbar's reign was important for the Mughal dynasty because he was able to consolidate the empire and organize it efficiently. This in turn provided a good starting point for his successor, the Emperor Jahangir, and for the two later rulers Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. During these three reigns the area under Mughal control was expanded and the revenue increased. Life at the court was that of great luxury. The court set the fashions. The leaders of society were not merely rich people but people with a variety of interests, both intellectual and social. The seventeenth century in India was indeed an age of magnificence.

### Jahangir

As was the case with most princes of the royal family, Jahangir was appointed governor of Avadh and Bengal as a young man, so that he could gain some experience of administration and government. On the death of

Akbar in 1605, Jahangir became king. As a person Jahangir was rather different from his father. He shared Akbar's interest in social and religious reforms, but he never studied the problems of religion as deeply as his father. Nor did he have his father's sharp mind. But he was fond of literature and was well-read. He wrote in a fine Persian style as could be seen from his memoirs—the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. They provide us with information about the personality and the reign of Jahangir. He knew a great deal about painting and boasted of having some of the best painters at his court.

In 1611 Jahangir married Nur Jahan. She was a beautiful and intelligent woman. She not only set the fashion in dress and manners at the court, but took an interest in matters of state as well. Jahangir fell ill for a long period and during this time she looked after the affairs of the king and ruled the empire. Jahangir used to take her advice on everything that was impor-



tant. Finally she became so powerful that even the coins were issued jointly in the name of Jahangir and Nur Jahan.

Jahangir's reign was on the whole quiet as compared to later Mughal rulers. There were not too many campaigns. Jahangir strengthened Mughal control over Bengal. The earlier trouble which Akbar had with the Rana of Mewar was sorted out. Jahangir who was himself married to Rajput princesses such as Jodha Bai and Man Bai, continued his father's policy of matri-



Coin of Jahangir

monial alliances with the Rajput princes. An army was sent to the Punjab hills and Kangra was conquered. The frontier with the kingdom of Ahmadnagar, which had been a source of trouble, was settled. One of the results of all these campaigns in various parts of India was that many of the small chieftains and Afghan nobles who had not yet acknowledged

Mughal overlordship, were made to do so. In this way the empire was strengthened.

But Jahangir continued to have his troubles. The area of Qandahar in Afghanistan was lost to the Persians. This was a serious loss as the city of Qandahar was important for Indian trade with western Asia. In addition as long as the Mughals held Qandahar they could defend themselves more easily against attacks from central and western Asia. Jahangir also had trouble with his son Shah Jahan who rebelled against him. Shah Jahan was worried lest one of his brothers should be made the successor to Jahangir, so he decided to show how strong he was by rebelling against his father. Jahangir found it difficult to control his son. And then there was trouble with the Portuguese. The Portuguese, not content with the big profits they were making in the trade with India, took to piracy and began to attack Indian ships. They attacked a ship which belonged to the Mughal government and this made Jahangir so angry that he refused to allow the Portuguese to trade with the merchants of the Mughal State, until the Portuguese made amends.

By this time the English were also getting interested in the possibilities of trade with India. The Portuguese tried their best to keep the English out as the two were jealous of each other. It



was during Jahangir's reign that the English king sent his ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, to the court at Agra. Sir Thomas tried to persuade Jahangir to sign a trade agreement with the English, but the emperor would not do

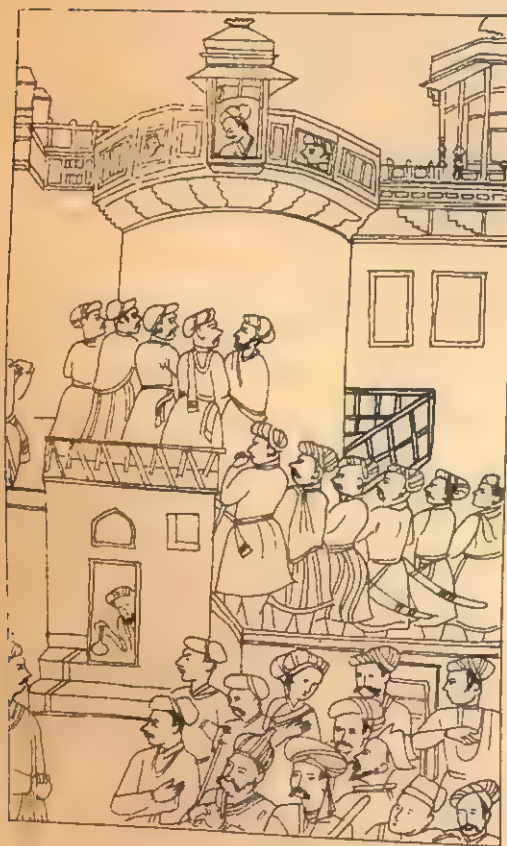
so. Sir Thomas spent three years at Agra and has left a very lively account of his life at the Mughal court.

One of the things for which Jahangir is remembered is his chain of justice. He wished his officers to deal justly with his subjects. So he had a long golden chain made to which bells were attached and tied it to the wall of the palace. He announced that anyone who felt he had been unjustly treated by the government could pull at this chain and make his complaint before the officer. The idea was noble but one wonders how many people had the courage to pull at the chain and make a complaint against an officer of the government.

### Shah Jahan

When the name Shah Jahan is mentioned most people think of two things—the Taj Mahal and the Peacock Throne. The Taj Mahal is the world-famous tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, Shah Jahan's wife. The Peacock Throne was a golden, jewel-studded throne which Shah Jahan used and which was later looted and taken to Iran. But during Shah Jahan's reign other things happened which were of greater importance to the Mughal empire.

Shah Jahan succeeded to the throne on the death of his father in 1628. The first thing he had to face was revolts in Bundelkhand and the Deccan. The former he put down without too much



Jahangir giving audience from the Balcony  
of his Palace  
(Based on an old Picture)

trouble. But the latter was more difficult to handle and the Deccan became a big trouble spot for the Mughals. Finally the kingdom of Ahmadnagar was annexed, Bijapur and Golconda submitted to the Mughals and signed a treaty of peace. Shah Jahan appointed his son, Prince Aurangzeb, as the viceroy of the Deccan. Aurangzeb tried hard to annex these two kingdoms but did not succeed. Another group of people who were beginning to defy the authority of the Mughals were the Marathas, and we shall hear more about them later.

Having attended to matters in the Deccan, Shah Jahan turned his attention to the north-west. He sent his armies to Balkh and Badakshan in Central Asia in order to secure the

defence of north-western India. Shah Jahan who had recovered Qandahar from the Iranians but had lost it again tried thrice to capture the city but failed each time. In the end he gave up the attempt.

Shah Jahan also had trouble with the Portuguese who had a settlement at Hugli. They used this as a base for



Coin of Shah Jahan

A picture of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal  
(Courtesy: Taj Mahal Museum, Agra)



full of troubles. The empire was at its largest under Aurangzeb and he ruled over nearly the whole of India. But various changes had taken place in the system of governing. Mughal administration was not what it had been under Akbar. Aurangzeb's trouble arose mainly out of the fact that people in many parts of his empire were in revolt. Much of his time was therefore spent in trying to put down these revolts.

The kingdoms of the Deccan—

Bijapur and Golconda—as we have seen were never actually annexed. By the time of Aurangzeb's reign these kingdoms had become weak. Meanwhile the Marathas were gaining in strength. So Aurangzeb felt he had to send his armies to the Deccan to prevent the Marathas from overpowering these kingdoms. The problems of the Deccan were now increased because the Marathas were beginning to assert their strength.

### The Marathas

The Marathas were small chieftains who owed allegiance to the Deccan kingdoms. Many of them were employed as officers in these kingdoms as well as under the Mughals. When they saw the Deccan kingdoms being attacked by the Mughals, they began to break away. They gathered bands of soldiers around them and began defying the authority of the Deccan kingdoms.



Coin of Aurangzeb

Tomb of Itimad-ud-daula, Agra





This they did easily because the countryside where they were strong, the region around Poona and the Konkan, was hilly and they would hide in the hills when an army was sent against them. By using the tactics of guerilla warfare they succeeded in harassing the Mughal armies. Gradually they became so strong that they defied not only the local kingdoms but the Mughals too.

The most powerful of the Maratha chiefs was Shivaji. His father had been a feudatory of Bijapur and had served in the Bijapur army. But Shivaji was ambitious and seeing the weakness of

Bijapur asserted his independence. The king of Bijapur sent one of his generals Afzal Khan against him, but Shivaji killed him. Then Aurangzeb sent one of his officers, Jai Singh to deal with Shivaji. Jai Singh was very keen that there should be a treaty between the Mughals and the Marathas, because he realized how powerful the Marathas could become. Shivaji was persuaded by Jai Singh to go to Aurangzeb's court. But his manners were too independent for the liking of the emperor, so he had Shivaji imprisoned. But Shivaji was clever and escaped. And now he was determined to harass the Mughals. He declared himself the independent ruler of the Maratha kingdom and was crowned in 1674. In the following years, until his death in 1680, he succeeded in building up a strong Maratha state.

Shivaji was able to do this because of two reasons. First of all the Mughal control over the Deccan had become quite weak. The Mughal government was unable to stop the revolts or prevent the chieftains from breaking away. Secondly, the Marathas worked out a revenue system by which they obtained a large revenue and could maintain good armies.

The Maratha state was governed by the king who advised and assisted by a council of eight ministers—the



Shivaji

piracy in the Bay of Bengal. The Mughal armies cleared them out of Hugli. The armies then marched north-eastwards and annexed the region of Kamrupa (in Assam).



Shah Jahan on the Peacock Throne  
(Based on an old Picture)



Relief Work on Marbles in the Taj Mahal,  
Agra

Taj Mahal, Agra





Agra Fort, Agra



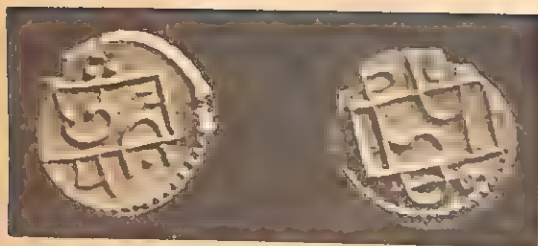
Jama Masjid, Delhi

Meanwhile Shah Jahan had built a new city as his capital, the city of Shahjahanabad. Today it is a part of Delhi. In 1657 Shah Jahan fell ill and his four sons immediately began fighting amongst themselves for the throne. Aurangzeb won. He kept his father a prisoner at the fort of Agra. From the fort Shah Jahan could see the Taj and remember his wife Mumtaz Mahal. When he died in 1666 he was buried alongside his wife in the Taj Mahal.

### Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb successfully defeated all his brothers and claimed the throne in 1658. He had a long reign lasting almost fifty years. But his reign was





Coin of Shivaji

*ashtapradhan*. The revenue of the state came mainly from the land. The state was entitled to two-fifths of the produce but we do not know how much was actually collected from the peasants. This was the assessment on those peasants and cultivators who were living in the Maratha kingdom. From those living outside the Maratha kingdom (and these were areas mainly under the control of the Mughals or the Deccan kingdoms), the Maratha government levied two taxes. One was called *chauth* and this was one quarter of the total revenue paid to the Mughal government or the Deccan kingdoms. This was a tax which the Maratha government took in return for promising not to plunder and raid their territory. The other tax was the *sardeshmukhi* which was an additional one-tenth. Therefore the peasant who was living outside the Maratha kingdom had to bear an additional burden. All this money was used for building up the Maratha state. This also shows the weakness of the Mughal government in the Deccan

The successors of Shivaji were weak rulers, except for the Queen Tara Bai who acted as regent for her little son. Because of the weakness of the rulers, the government gradually moved into the hands of the Peshwas. These were the *brahmin* ministers of the state. They were to become very powerful. As long as Aurangzeb ruled, the Mughals managed to keep some control over the Marathas. But soon after the death of Aurangzeb, the Marathas rose in great strength and became a dominant power in India.

### Other Revolts in the Mughal Empire

There were many rebellions during the reign of Aurangzeb. Not all these were rebellions of chieftains and rulers. Some of them were supported by the peasants. The Jats of the Mathura district rebelled. The peasants were complaining because the tax on their produce which had been one-third in the time of Akbar had slowly been increased to almost a half. This was too heavy a tax for them to bear. Yet Aurangzeb could not reduce the tax because he needed the money for maintaining his armies.

The Mughal armies were now involved fully in the Deccan. The campaigns against Bijapur and Golconda went on year after year. Finally the two kingdoms were annexed in 1686 and 1687. But meanwhile, Aurangzeb was begin-

ning to have trouble with the Rajputs. The rulers of Mewar and Marwar, the two major kingdoms in Rajasthan, came into conflict with Aurangzeb.

To make matters worse, the Mughal government became involved in a series of campaigns against the Sikhs as well. This was a bad thing, because the Punjab was a rich area and provided a fair amount of revenue. The problem about taxes got entangled with religious problems as well.

### The Sikhs

The Sikhs began as the followers of Guru Nanak and were devotees of the new religion which he preached. By the seventeenth century Sikhism had become the religion of the peasants and artisans in many areas of the Punjab.

Guru Nanak was succeeded by a series of nine *gurus*. The earlier ones concentrated mainly on the religious aspects of Sikhism. But gradually the *gurus* became the military leaders of the Sikhs as well. After the death of the seventh *guru*, Aurangzeb tried to take advantage of the differences over the succession of the next *guru*. Meantime the power of the Sikhs was increasing. In order to curb this power, the Mughal administration ordered the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur in 1675. This naturally made the Sikhs

very angry. So the tenth and last *guru* Govind Singh, began to organize the Sikhs as soldiers and prepared them for battle against the Mughal armies. The term used for the Sikhs now was *khalsa* meaning 'the pure'. They were organized as fighting groups under the leadership of Govind Singh. In addition, soldiers from Afghanistan were also recruited into the Sikh armies. As in the case of the Marathas, the Sikhs carried out raids in various places. But the Sikhs were not able to establish an independent state during the reign of Aurangzeb as the Marathas had done. This the Sikhs achieved in the eighteenth century.

Thus what began as a religious movement, became a political one as well. The Mughal government was not strong enough to suppress the Sikh revolt. In the eighteenth century the Mughals became even weaker and everyone was grabbing territory. The Sikh chieftains also saw this as an opportunity to become rulers of small states.

Aurangzeb had problems with the Portuguese and the English Portuguese pirates renewed their activity in the Bay of Bengal. This time they used Chittagong as a base. So the Mughal armies had to be sent out against them. The armies were successful for they not only captured Chittagong but also annexed the eastern part of

Bengal. The west coast of India was at this time being threatened by English pirates who attacked Indian ships. This made the Mughal government very angry. There was an English factory at Surat from where the English traded with India. So the Mughal government threatened them that unless they stopped the English pirates and paid a fine of one and half lakhs of rupees, the government would not allow the English to trade with India. This frightened the English and they paid the fine and stopped the pirates from their raids on the west coast.

In the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign, the Mughal empire was no longer as strong as it had once been under Akbar. In fact, the empire was beginning to break up. But Aurangzeb was not really aware of what was happening. To make matters worse he was influenced by an orthodox Muslim group and he decided that he would rule in accordance with the laws of Islam. This was a policy different from that of his ancestors who were tolerant and liberal rulers. Besides, it was quite the wrong policy for a country such as India which has always had a mixture of all kinds of people and religions and where no type of orthodoxy could have worked. Aurangzeb did not understand the problems of India as well as Akbar had done.

## Religion at the Mughal Court

The Mughal court in the seventeenth century was divided into two groups—while some supported orthodoxy others were more liberal. The Muslims in India still continued many of the traditions and way of life which they had observed before being converted to Islam. Many of them had been influenced by liberal ideas. The liberal Muslims continued the traditions established by Akbar, and others who thought like Akbar. The most popular amongst the liberals was the young prince Dara Shukoh. He too had a brilliant mind and was extremely well-read. From the age of nineteen he began to write on religion and philosophy. His best known work was a study of *sufi* and *vedanta* philosophy in which he showed how similar the two types of philosophy were. Dara Shukoh also translated the *Upanishads* into Persian in 1657. (This translation was retranslated into Latin in 1801 and thus the *Upanishads* were read for the first time by European philosophers). Unfortunately Dara Shukoh was killed in the fight for the throne between him and his brother Aurangzeb.

The leader of the orthodox Muslims was Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi, who had lived during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir. He was a man with a brilliant



mind and was an impressive teacher. His teachings therefore influenced many people at the court, both during his life-time and after his death. He established a centre where his disciples and pupils continued his work.

Although he became an orthodox Muslim, Aurangzeb was sincere in his religious beliefs. He was upset by the luxury at the court and he wanted to lead a simple life devoted to religion. He became unpopular when he reintroduced *jaziya* (the poll-tax on non-Muslims) and when he destroyed temples. What he did not realize is that the job of a king is to rule and to rule efficiently and that religion should not be allowed to interfere with the government.

### Revenue

From the reign of Jahangir onwards, it became fashionable in the seventeenth century to live well and to surround oneself with as much wealth as was possible. The nobles and the high officials lived in palaces, dressed in the finest of clothes, decked themselves with jewels and were entertained by musicians and singers. The Mughal court itself was the symbol of pomp and luxury. Even when the emperor went on a hunt it involved expensive arrangements all around. All this luxury was possible because of the increase in the income of the government. And this increase was due to the

hard work of the peasants and the artisans.

For the peasants there was no luxury. They worked hard in their fields from morning till night as they had done for centuries. Their main concern was to have a good enough harvest so that they could pay their taxes. In the seventeenth century the taxation was increased from one-third to almost a half. This made life more difficult for the peasants. The extra income from the taxes was soon swallowed up. The officers had to be paid and as the empire grew larger more officers were recruited for the administration of the empire. The armies had also to be maintained. In addition the luxury and the splendour of the Mughal court required more and more money.

The artisans had also to work hard since some of the income came from trade. India was now trading with Persia, China, East Africa, Russia and western Europe. As we have seen ships from various European countries such as Portugal and England came to India and took back large cargoes. Indian merchants sold their goods for high prices and this income added to the wealth of India. Trade was mainly in the hands of Hindu merchants. The increase in trade led to the greater employment of artisans in the towns. The towns themselves flourished. Many travellers of this period have described

the wealth of towns such as Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Banaras, Surat and Masulipatnam. European merchants were chiefly interested in Indian textiles, and eagerly bought cargoes of *malmals* from Dacca (in East Bengal), silks from Banaras and cotton textiles from Surat, Ahmedabad (on the west coast) and Madurai. Pepper from Malabar was eagerly sought by foreign traders.

The English were becoming more and more interested in the Indian trade. The English merchants formed themselves into a trading company called the East India Company. They first set up a factory at Surat and later spread to other parts of the coastal areas. In Bengal they were allowed to trade anywhere they wished and the local governor was paid a small sum in return for this right. This payment was nothing as compared to the large profits made by the Company.

### Architecture and Art

As the income of the Mughal Government increased, not only did the luxuries at the court become greater, but even the buildings which the rulers had built became finer and richer. In Akbar's time most of the buildings were made of red sandstone. Now they were often built of the more expensive marble brought from Rajasthan. These were the palaces and mosques at the

forts in Delhi, Agra and Lahore, and tombs such as that of Itimad-ud-Daulah at Agra.

The reign of Shah Jahan is particularly remembered for the beautiful buildings which he designed and had built. These buildings are beautiful for two reasons. First of all they combined many of the finest features of Indian and foreign architecture. There were domes of various shapes, decorated arches, tall minarets, balconies, broad drooping eaves, small pavilions and decorative features commonly found in Indian architecture. Secondly, the proportions of the buildings are very well-balanced. It is for both these reasons that the Taj has now become famous throughout the world.

By the time of Aurangzeb's reign, a decline had set in and Mughal architecture was no longer as impressive as it had been. Many of the buildings built at this time were copies of earlier buildings. When people start copying things from the past then it usually means that they have no ideas or imagination of their own.

Of all the Mughal emperors, Jahangir was the one who was most fond of paintings. He could recognize each artist by his style. His court attracted many of the best artists of the time such as Bishan Das, Murad, Mansur and Bahzad. He encouraged his artists to take an interest in other schools of painting as well. He was



The Siege of Golconda in 1687—Post- Mughal Style  
(From the Collection of Red Fort)



the wealth of towns such as Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Banaras, Surat and Masulipatnam. European merchants were chiefly interested in Indian textiles, and eagerly bought cargoes of *malmals* from Dacca (in East Bengal), silks from Banaras and cotton textiles from Surat, Ahmedabad (on the west coast) and Madurai. Pepper from Malabar was eagerly sought by foreign traders.

The English were becoming more and more interested in the Indian trade. The English merchants formed themselves into a trading company called the East India Company. They first set up a factory at Surat and later spread to other parts of the coastal areas. In Bengal they were allowed to trade anywhere they wished and the local governor was paid a small sum in return for this right. This payment was nothing as compared to the large profits made by the Company.

### Architecture and Art

As the income of the Mughal Government increased, not only did the luxuries at the court become greater, but even the buildings which the rulers had built became finer and richer. In Akbar's time most of the buildings were made of red sandstone. Now they were often built of the more expensive marble brought from Rajasthan. These were the palaces and mosques at the

forts in Delhi, Agra and Lahore, and tombs such as that of Itimad-ud-Daulah at Agra.

The reign of Shah Jahan is particularly remembered for the beautiful buildings which he designed and had built. These buildings are beautiful for two reasons. First of all they combined many of the finest features of Indian and foreign architecture. There were domes of various shapes, decorated arches, tall minarets, balconies, broad drooping eaves, small pavilions and decorative features commonly found in Indian architecture. Secondly, the proportions of the buildings are very well-balanced. It is for both these reasons that the Taj has now become famous throughout the world.

By the time of Aurangzeb's reign, a decline had set in and Mughal architecture was no longer as impressive as it had been. Many of the buildings built at this time were copies of earlier buildings. When people start copying things from the past then it usually means that they have no ideas or imagination of their own.

Of all the Mughal emperors, Jahangir was the one who was most fond of paintings. He could recognize each artist by his style. His court attracted many of the best artists of the time such as Bishan Das, Murad, Mansur and Bahzad. He encouraged his artists to take an interest in other schools of painting as well. He was



The Siege of Golconda in 1687—Post-Mughal Style  
(From the Collection of Red Fort)

curious about the techniques of European painting when some of these were shown to him by Thomas Roe. A big change took place when Aurangzeb became emperor. He disapproved of painting and would not let the artists work at the court. So they went away to the various provincial capitals where the local governors employed them. Some went to the small states of the Punjab and Rajasthan such as Kangra, Guler, Garhwal in the Punjab hills and to Mewar, Bikaner, Bundi, Kōtah and Kishangarh, etc. in Rajasthan. Another school of painting which flourished at this time was the Deccan school which was encouraged by the Bijapuri kings. In many of these places there developed an interest in painting and some of the finest paintings of the eighteenth century were painted.

### Music

The earlier kings prided themselves on the number of good musicians whom they collected at their courts. The Hindustani or north Indian style of music was popular at the Mughal court. Once again however, Aurangzeb in his later years developed a dislike for music. The musicians were discouraged by this and many went to the provinces and the small kingdoms. Some however remained at the Mughal court since the nobles continued to be their patrons. New styles of singing

such as the *khayal* which had been developed in the Mughal court and the *thumri* became popular in the new centres.

### Literature

The Mughal emperors were patrons of literature and learning. They were genuinely interested in both these activities. As we have seen the royal family itself produced writers and scholars of distinction. A textbook was prepared under the instructions of Aurangzeb for his grandson, explaining the scientific knowledge of Indian scholars. Persian continued to be the language of the court. But in the towns and the villages people used Hindi and Urdu. Apart from Kabir and Tulsidas, there were others whose poetry had become popular. One was the blind poet of Agra, Surdas, whose *Sur Sagar* is recited to this day. Another was Raskhan, a Muslim nobleman whose poems on the life of Krishna are known as *Prem Vatika*. The *Satsai* of Bihari was also popular. A number of poets had begun writing in Urdu and in the eighteenth century Delhi and Lucknow were to become the centres of Urdu poetry.

The seventeenth century was an age of splendour for India. The Mughal court set the fashion for good living. In the eighteenth century when the empire declined, the culture which it



had created continued to live. The the break-up of the empire continued smaller kingdoms which arose from the fashion set by the Mughals.

## Exercises

### I. Words and terms you should know

1. *ashtapradhan* — A Council of eight ministers who acted as advisers to the Maratha king in matters relating to the state.
2. *chauth* — One-quarter of the land revenue paid to the government, which was collected as a tax by the Marathas, from people living outside the Maratha kingdom in return for which they were promised security against plunder and raid of their territory by the Marathas.
3. *sardeshmukhi* — A tax equivalent to one-tenth of the land revenue levied by the Marathas on all territories.
4. *khalsa* — Guru Govind Singh remodelled the Sikh community and organized them as soldiers and termed them as the *khalsa* or 'the pure'.

### II. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.

1. The reign of——was important for the——dynasty because he was able to consolidate the empire.(Humayun, Akbar, Aurangzeb, Mughals, Marathas, Afghan)
2. ——wrote his memoirs in which he described himself and the happenings at the court.(Akbar, Shivaji, Jahangir)
3. It was during the reign of——that the English king sent his ambassador——to the court at Agra.(Babar, Akbar, Jahangir, Sir Thomas Roe, Hawkins)
4. ——sucessfully defeated all his brothers and claimed the throne in 1658. (Babar, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb)
5. The——gathered bands of soldiers around them and began by defying the authority of the Deccan kingdoms.(Mughals, Afghans, Jats, Marathas)

### III. Match the contents of column A with those of column B.

A	B
1. Jahangir's reign was on the whole	1. for piracy in the Bay of Bengal.
2. The Taj Mahal is the world famous	2. under the leadership of Govind Singh.
3. The Portuguese used Hughli as a base	3. the fact that people in many parts of his empire were in revolt.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 4. Many of Aurangzeb's problems arose from<br>5. The Sikhs were organized as fighting groups | 4. quite compared to later Mughal rulers.<br>5. tomb of Mumtaz Mahal. |
|--|---|

IV. Which of the statements are correct? Answer 'yes' or 'no' after each statement.

1. Jahangir did not marry any Rajput princess.
2. Bijapur and Golconda never submitted to the Mughals and did not sign any treaty.
3. Shah Jahan was on very friendly terms with the Portuguese.
4. The Maratha state was governed by the king who was advised and assisted by a council of eight ministers.
5. The Muslims of India gave up all the traditions and the way of life which they had observed before their conversion to Islam.

V. Answer the following questions:

1. Which of the three emperors—Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb—had the most peaceful reign and why?
2. Who were the Sikhs? Write a short account of their emergence as a political power.
3. Why were various people discontented during the reign of the later Mughal rulers?
4. How were the Marathas able to build up a strong and Independent state?
5. What was the difference between those who were more inclined towards orthodoxy and those who were more liberal at the Mughal court?
6. "The 17th century in India was indeed the age of magnificence". Do you agree with this statement?

VI. Interesting things to do:

1. Try and locate as many pictures as you can of the important personalities of this period. Describe the one who interests you most.
2. Listen to a *khayal* and a *thumri* and find out the characteristics of these forms of music.

## CHAPTER NINE

# The Fall of the Mughal Empire

The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 led to the usual event—a war of succession among his sons. He had three surviving sons who fought each other for the throne. The one who was victorious took the title of Bahadur Shah and began to reign in 1707. His short reign of four years was full of trouble. Bahadur Shah had tried to extend his control over the Rajputs. But they rebelled. Bahadur Shah could not do very much as meanwhile the Sikhs had revolted. The Marathas at this time were not in a position to create a serious problem for the Mughals, because they were fighting among themselves. They continued to raid Mughal territory now and again. The Maratha Raja Shahu had accepted a mansab (rank) in the Mughal administration.

The death of Bahadur Shah in 1712 again led to a war of succession amongst his sons. There were a number of weak rulers who reigned for short periods. Thereafter Muhammad Shah

tried to pull the empire together. But the empire had already started to break up. The revolt of the Sikhs was now led by Banda who was determined to establish an independent Sikh state in the Punjab. Although he failed to do so, he did succeed in harassing the Mughals. The Marathas were reorganizing themselves under a new system of government, that of the *brahmin* ministers—the Peshwas. They were gradually extending their control towards North India. The Afghans who had settled in Rohilkhand were also in revolt against the Mughal government.

Even more disturbing for the Mughal government was the fact that the assertion of independence had spread to other parts of the empire. For example, three important provincial governors established three kingdoms. These were the kingdoms of Hyderabad, Bengal and Avadh.

As if this was not enough trouble for the Mughal kings, they also had to





Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.

© Government of India copyright, 1988.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

face a series of attacks from the north-west. These attacks reduced the strength of the Mughals. The first invasion was in 1739 when Nadir Shah of Iran, who had already taken Kabul from the Mughals swept into the Indian plains from the north-west and invaded the city of Delhi. The Mughals submitted hoping that he would collect the wealth which he wanted and then leave. Nadir Shah's army looted the city and left it deserted. The famous Peacock Throne of Shah Jahan and the Koh-i-nur diamond were taken to Iran.

An Afghan adventurer followed in the footsteps of Nadir Shah. This was Ahmad Shah Abdali, who conquered the Punjab and added it to his territory in Afghanistan. Meanwhile the Marathas, under the Peshwas, were gaining in strength and acquiring territory first in western India. The Marathas did not directly attack the Mughal emperor because they wanted to establish their control by using the now rather weak emperor. But at this point they came into conflict with Ahmad Shah Abdali and were drawn into battle. The third battle of Panipat was fought in 1761 between the Afghans and the Marathas. The Marathas were defeated and forced to withdraw from northern India. The empire was now reduced to the area around Delhi. Mughal emperors continued to rule in name until 1857. But the real political power in the eigh-

teenth century was in the hands of the new kingdoms.

### European Traders

In the eighteenth century the Mughal empire declined, and the new kingdoms rose to power. At the same time there were other people who were trying to establish their hold on India. These were the Europeans. They had two big advantages. Firstly, in place of the Mughal empire a number of states had arisen such as those of the Marathas, Hyderabad, Avadh and Bengal. It was easier for the Europeans to fight these states than it would have been for them to face the combined might of the Mughal empire as it had existed during the reign of Akbar or Aurangzeb. The second advantage which the Europeans had was that they came by sea and that they were all good sea fighters. The Mughal emperors had never thought of the importance of sea power and therefore had no really good navy. So when the Europeans began to capture the towns along the coast of India, neither the Mughals nor any of the other states could stop them. In addition to this the superior technology of the Europeans was in their favour.

How did the Europeans capture these towns and make themselves powerful in India? This is another story which you will read in the book on modern India. But the story

begins in the Mughal period.

The earliest of the Europeans to settle down in India were the Portuguese, and we have seen in an earlier chapter how they established themselves at Goa.

For many decades the Portuguese were the only European power which had trade with India. Taking advantage of their naval supremacy they forced the Indian and other Asian merchant ships to pay money for permission to carry on trade and thus began to dominate Indian overseas trade. But in the seventeenth century a number of other European traders came to India. They did not come as individual traders, but banded together and formed what was called a 'trading company'. They shared the expenses as well as the profits of the trade. The factors responsible for the coming of the Europeans were many. First there was a demand for Indian goods, particularly spices and textiles. The Arabs had control over most of the transportation of such goods and they demanded a high price from European merchants. Therefore, the European merchants thought of trading directly with India. Even more important was the fact that in Europe, the merchant community was now very prosperous and there was an increase in the production of merchandise. So the merchants were seeking new markets and also areas from which raw materials

could be obtained cheaply. Ships coming to the west coast of India took back cargoes of cotton textiles and indigo. Further south, Malabar provided exports of pepper and spices. The centres around Madras sent sugar. From Bengal, trade was mainly in silk and saltpetre.

### The European Companies

The small kingdom of Denmark set up a Danish East India Company. They built a factory at Tranquebar (south of Madras) on the east coast. But the Danish Company was not very successful. Part of the reason for its failure was the competition from the Dutch Company which came from Holland and was called the United East India Company of the Netherlands. The Dutch came to Asia looking for areas rich in spices. These they found in Java and Sumatra and so they began trading in spices. Their interest in India was only to obtain some halting places for their ships going from Europe to South-East Asia. English traders also came out searching for spices. The Dutch having established themselves in South-East Asia, the English turned to the Indian trade, particularly the textile trade. They soon took over a large part of the existing European trade with India.

The English had formed a trading company in 1600 and had been making



many attempts to get trading rights in India. As we have seen they sent an ambassador to Jahangir's Court only for this reason and finally succeeded. The English had factories at Masulipatnam, Surat, Fort St. George and Fort William. The last two places were to become famous in later years as Madras and Calcutta. They also acquired Bombay as part of the dowry which the Portuguese princess brought when she married the English king, Charles II. All these places were well-located from the point of view of trade and shipping.

The English gradually succeeded in ousting the Dutch and the Portuguese from the Indian trade. The Portuguese had anyway become unpopular in India. Besides, English sea-power was now greater than that of the Portuguese and the Dutch and this helped the English to capture the Indian trade. There had been two English companies trading in India and this had created some trouble. In 1703 the two were united and were given the name of 'The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies.'

But the English had also to face further competition. In 1664 the French had also formed a company to trade in India. The French established themselves at a place south of Madras which they called Pondicherry. Curiously enough it was almost exactly the same place which in the first century

A.D. had been the ancient Roman trading station of Arikamedu. The French Company proved to be a stronger rival to the English than any other European company. The competition between them in the eighteenth century was, as well shall see, very close and intense. The French and the English companies not only succeeded in capturing Indian trade but also began to interfere in the politics of the new kingdoms which arose in the eighteenth century.

### **Causes of the Decline of the Mughal Empire**

In the eighteenth century the Mughal empire began to break up. Some of the causes which led to the decline of the Mughal empire can be traced back to the seventeenth century. But the real weakness showed itself in the eighteenth century.

The successors of Aurangzeb were weak rulers. They were unable to prevent the breaking up of the empire. They did not have the respect of their people. Each time a king died there was a war of succession among the claimants. In this way, a great deal of money and energy was wasted. The prince who finally became king remained suspicious of the officers and the courtiers. When the emperors became weaker, the provincial governors became stronger. As we have seen some

of them, such as those of Hyderabad, Avadh and Bengal asserted their independence.

Another important reason for the decline of the empire was that it met with financial troubles. By this time there was neither enough money nor enough *jagirs* to assign to various officers. The *zamindars* got dissatisfied with the control imposed upon them by the government. They came into conflict with the nobles because they felt that the nobles had taken too large a share of the income of the state. On occasion the protest of the *zamindars* took the form of revolt. The peasant, after they had paid the taxes, had less for themselves and they became more and more poor. Sometimes the peasants would support the dissatisfied zamindars. Since the Mughals were tied up in many wars, they needed a regular supply of money. Aurangzeb's campaigns in the Deccan for instance were a big drain on the Mughal income. The Marathas and the Sikhs kept threatening the Mughal government, so a large part of the army was kept busy in trying to control these two areas.

Some of the revenue was also spent on administration. Mughal administration was no longer as efficient as it used to be under Akbar. The *mansabdari* system had changed in many ways.

The number of *mansabdars* was now more than three times what they were under Akbar. The *mansabdars* were no longer so honest about the revenue which they collected and the number of horses and troops which they maintained for the emperor. In fact many of them had started cheating so much that the horses had to be branded with a number. Akbar had insisted that the officers must be transferred from one part of the empire to another. This had prevented them from becoming too powerful in any particular area. But by the eighteenth century officers were often not transferred and many of them began to behave like little local rulers.

The military administration of the Mughals had also become weaker. The proportion of high officials was far too big. Nor was the efficiency of the army being maintained. The artillery arm which had once been the pride of the Mughal army was now backward in its technology as compared to other armies. The Mughals had not kept up their interest in the latest models of guns which were being developed in other parts of the world. They were often content to employ foreign officers to man their artillery instead of training Indians to do the job. Nor did the Mughals pay much attention to sea power. They were not aware of the threat from the European countries

and therefore never thought that it would be useful to have a strong navy. Even the new types of ships which the Portuguese and the English used did not excite the curiosity of the Mughals.

Mughal India showed little awareness of the discoveries which the new science of Europe was revealing to Europeans, or the new knowledge which European thinkers were developing. Even an object of such considerable interest as the mechanical clock failed to attract attention. The aristocracy and the wealthy traders seemed so contented with their prosperity and luxury that they became uninterested in the advancement of knowledge.

Luxurious living was another aspect of Mughal India which consumed much of the income from the land and from trade. If the peasants and the artisans had a difficult life, the aristocrats and the wealthy traders in the towns had an equally easy life. Money poured in from all sides and this enabled the Mughals to live in splendour. The rich competed with each other in the grandeur of their homes, the elegance of their clothes, the costliness of their jewels, in surrounding themselves with poets, artists, musicians and others who would add to their enjoyment of life. All these things

became symbols of high status and a considerable amount of money was spent on maintaining them. Such luxurious living also brought with it social and moral decay in the eighteenth century. The aristocrats spent their hours in idleness or in drinking. Finally, even when the empire was declining, they were incapable of doing anything to save it or themselves. However, not all the provincial courts had such idle and incapable aristocrats. Some of the local governors in the new states were ambitious persons and tried to keep some discipline amongst their officers.

The Mughal empire declined, and Delhi became a weak, unguarded city, which had once known imperial splendour. But the culture, the way of life which was a part of this splendour, did not decline. It moved from Delhi and was taken up in the small kingdoms and provincial kingdoms which arose in the eighteenth century. The history of India in the eighteenth century has to be seen in these kingdoms. It was here that some traces of the glory of the Mughals could still be seen. It was the events which took place in these kingdoms that decided the next phase of Indian history.



### Exercises

#### I. Match the contents of column A with those of column B.

A	B
1. The English gradually succeeded in	1. never thought of building a strong navy.
2. Some of the causes which led to the decline of the Mughal empire	2. was taken to Iran.
3. The Mughals were not aware of the threat from the European countries and	3. ousting the Dutch and Portuguese from the Indian trade.
4. The famous Peacock Throne of Shah Jahan	4. can be traced back to the 17th century.

#### II. Which of the statements given below are correct? Answer 'yes' or 'no' after each statement.

1. In 1739 Nadir Shah invaded the North-west of India and swept into the city of Delhi.
2. Ahmad Shah Abdali conquered the Punjab but did not add it to his kingdom in Afghanistan.
3. The Mughal emperors had never thought of the importance of sea power and therefore they did not build up a good navy.
4. In the seventeenth century the Portuguese were the only European power trading in India.
5. The successors of Aurangzeb were strong rulers.

#### III. Fill in the blanks with the right word or words from those given in brackets.

1. The revolt of the \_\_\_\_\_ was now led by \_\_\_\_\_ who was determined to establish an independent Sikh state in the \_\_\_\_\_ (Afghans, Mughals, Sikhs, Banda, Nanak, Bengal, Bihar, Punjab)
2. A third battle was fought at \_\_\_\_\_ in 1761 between the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Marathas. (Talikota, Tarain, Panipat, Afghans, Mughals, Santnamis)
3. The earliest of the Europeans to settle down in India were the \_\_\_\_\_ (English, Dutch, French, Portuguese)
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ Company proved to be a stronger rival to the English than had been any other European company. (Dutch, Portuguese, French, German)

5. The———Raja Shahu had accepted a *mansab* in the———  
administration. (Afghans, Marathas, English Dutch, Portuguese, Mughal)

IV Answer the following questions:

1. How far was Aurangzeb responsible for the decline of the Mughal empire?
2. What advantage did the Europeans have over the Mughals in India?
3. What helped the English to capture the Indian trade?
4. Who were the main rivals of the English in India?
5. What were the causes that brought about the break-up of the Mughal empire?

V. Interesting things to do:

1. Locate on the map of India the places where the different European nations established their trading centres.
2. Visit the nearest weaver in your town, and write a description of how cloth is woven.



## Important Dates

A.D.	712	Defeat and death of Dahir and the Arab conquest of Sind
	753	Rise of the Rashtrakuta empire
	836	Accession of Bhoja I, a Pratihara king
	907	Accession of Parantaka I, a Chola king
	973	Foundation of the kingdom of the Later Chalukyas
	1026	Sack of Somanath by Sultan Mahmud
	1030	Death of Sultan Mahmud
	1192	Second battle of Tarain—defeat of Prithviraj III by Muhammad Ghori
	1206	Death of Muhammad Ghori
	1206	Qutb-ud-din Aibak founded the Slave dynasty
	1210	Death of Qutab-ud-din Aibak
	1210-11	Accession of Iltutmish
	1236	Death of Iltutmish and Accession of Raziya
	1266	Accession of Ghiyas-ud-din Balban
	1290	Khalji dynasty founded
	1296	Accession of Ala-ud-din Khalji
	1297-1305	Ala-ud-din conquered Gujarat, Rathambhor, Chittor, Malwa, Ujjain, Mandu, Dhar and Chanderi
	1306-7	Malik Kafur's expedition to Devagiri
	1325	Accession of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq
	1336	Traditional date of the foundation of the Vijayanagara kingdom
	1347	Foundation of the Bahmani kingdom
	1393-94	Kingdom of Jaunpur founded
	1398	Timur's invasion
	1451	Lodi dynasty founded
	1481	Murder of Mahmud Gawan
	1484	Kingdom of Berar founded—beginning of disintegration of the Bahmani kingdom





1498	Arrival of Vasco da Gama
1526	First battle of Panipat—Babar defeated Ibrahim Lodi
1527	Battle of Khanua—Babar defeated Rana Sanga
1529-30	Death of Krishnadeva Raya
1530	Death of Babar and accession of Humayun
1538	Death of Guru Nanak
1539	Sher Shah defeated Humayun at Chausa
1545	Death of Sher Shah
1556	Death of Humayun and accession of Akbar
1556	Second battle of Panipat—Akbar defeated Hemu
1565	Battle of Talikota
1568-95	Akbar captured Chittor, Ranthambhor, Gujarat, Kashmir, Sind, Orissa and Baluchistan
1600	Queen Elizabeth granted Charter to the Company of Merchants in London to trade with the east
1605	Death of Akbar and accession of Jahangir
1616	Sir Thomas Roe received by Jahangir
1627	Death of Jahangir
1627	Birth of Shivaji (1630 according to some)
1628	Shah Jahan proclaimed emperor
1674	Shivaji assumed royal title
1680	Death of Shivaji
1686	Annexation of Bijapur
1687	Annexation of Golconda
1707	Death of Aurangzeb
1707	Accession of Bahadur Shah
1712	Death of Bahadur Shah
1739	Nadir Shah invaded and occupied Delhi
1747-61	Invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali
1761	Third battle of Panipat—Abdali defeated the Marathas





राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING